



PROPOSED COVERED LOADING YARD, KRONOSPAN, CHIRK

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

February 2022



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) of the proposed warehouse extension at the Kronospan site, Chirk (Proposed Development), was undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI).
- 1.2 The LVIA follows best practice guidance set out in '*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*' (3rd edition 2013, Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment), hereafter referred to as the GLVIA.
- 1.3 Landscape and visual effects are separate, although closely related and interlinked issues.
- 1.4 Landscape effects are caused by physical changes to the landscape, which may result in changes to the distinctive character of that landscape and how it is perceived.
- 1.5 Visual effects are changes to what can be seen by people as a result of what is proposed. A visual assessment assesses the change in visual amenity undergone by people (either individually or in groups) that would arise from any change in the nature of views experienced.
- 1.6 The LVIA aims to establish the following:
- A clear understanding of the Site and its context, in respect of the physical and perceived landscape and in respect of views and visual amenity;
 - An understanding of the Proposed Development in terms of how this would relate to the existing landscape and views;
 - An identification of the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development upon the landscape and upon views, throughout the life-cycle of the Proposed Development;
 - Potential for mitigation to reduce / eliminate any potential adverse effect on the landscape or views arising as a result of the Proposed Development; and
 - A conclusion as to the residual likely significant landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development.
- 1.7 The process follows a standard approach, namely:
- The establishment of the baseline conditions, against which the effects of the Proposed Development will be assessed;

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- The determination of the nature of the receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its sensitivity;
 - The prediction of the nature of the effect likely to occur, i.e. the magnitude of change; and
 - An assessment of whether a likely significant landscape and visual effect would be experienced by any receptor, by considering the predicted magnitude of change together with the sensitivity of the receptor, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures.

1.8 Further details regarding the specific methodologies of assessment and determination of significance are included in Appendix 1. The LVIA has been informed by both desk and field based studies.

1.9 It should be noted that the landscape (including the context in which views are experienced) is dynamic, i.e. it is affected by social, economic, technological and climatic changes, all of which can influence patterns of land use, land cover and land management. As such, the baseline context for the LVIA is not static.

Description of the Proposed Development

1.10 The Proposed Development is described in detail in the Planning Statement, and illustrated on the accompanying Drawings.

1.11 In summary, the Proposed Development would comprise a new covered loading yard that would form an extension to the existing main warehouse building at the Kronospan site. The new covered loading yard is illustrated in plan and section on Drawing 7000_665. As can be seen from the drawing, it would fill a gap that currently exists at the south-east corner of the existing warehouse. The new building would extend over the current reception/ office building (which would be demolished, with the facilities within relocated elsewhere within the Kronospan site). The new building would repeat the scale, cladding materials and architectural appearance of the existing warehouse and would have the same ridge height of 11.5m.

Legislative and Policy Context

1.12 Full details of the planning and policy background for the proposal, including an appraisal of effects on relevant landscape-related policies, as set out in the adopted Statutory Development Plan, are included in the Planning Statement. Key legislation and policy documents relevant to the LVIA are summarised below.

Statutory Landscape Designations

- 1.13 The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is located approximately 300m west of the wider Kronospan site at the closest point (and approximately 810m from the location of the Proposed Development). AONBs are a statutory designation, first designated under the auspices of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The primary purpose of an AONB, as set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, is to “*conserve and enhance the natural beauty*”.

European Landscape Convention

- 1.14 The UK Government is a signatory of the European Landscape Convention (ELC), which became binding in March 2007. The Convention is aimed at the protection, management and planning of all landscapes and raising awareness of the value of a living landscape. It relates chiefly to public bodies and to the policies, plans and programmes produced by these.
- 1.15 The LVIA is a development specific process which accords with Article 6C. The LVIA is informed by extant Landscape Character Assessment studies (described in Section 3 below), which more directly relate to the provisions of Article 6C.

Planning Policy

- 1.16 Full details of relevant planning policies are set out in the Planning Statement. Relevant documents include:
- *Planning Policy Wales*, edition 11 published in February 2021; and
 - *Wrexham Unitary Development Plan* (adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council 2005);
 - *Supplementary Planning Guidance Note: Clwydian and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (Adopted by Wrexham County Council 2018).

2 Methodology

Current Guidance

- 2.1 This LVIA has been based on the published best practice guidelines set out in the GLVIA, as set out in Section 1 above. The full methodology can be found in Appendix

1. The LVIA also has regard to *Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Technical Guidance Note 06/19* (Landscape Institute, 2019).

The Study Area

- 2.2 The study area for the LVIA has been determined based upon the assessor's prior knowledge of the Kronospan site and its surroundings, and previous experience of similar developments elsewhere. It is considered that, given the industrial context of the Site, there would be little scope for significant effects to extend over a wide area. To confirm this, the LVIA considers effects up to approximately 2km from the Proposed Development.

Significance of Effect

- 2.3 In the case of development (such as that proposed) that does not require Environmental Impact Assessment, there is no requirement to state whether an effect is significant or not. Nevertheless, it is considered of benefit to the decision-maker for such a statement to be made in the LVIA.
- 2.4 Not all landscape and visual effects arising as a result of a particular proposal will be significant. Furthermore, where likely significant environmental effects are predicted, this does not automatically mean that such effects are unacceptable. The acceptability of landscape and visual effects is a matter to be weighed in the planning balance alongside other factors. What is important is that the likely environmental effects of any proposal are transparently assessed and described in order that the relevant determining authority can bring a balanced and well-informed judgement to bear as part of the decision-making process.
- 2.5 The judgement in relation to this LVIA is that a greater than 'moderate' level of effect is more likely to be significant. This is because such an effect would generally result from larger magnitudes of change on higher sensitivity receptors. This does not preclude a 'moderate' effect or lower being significant, or a greater than 'moderate' effect not being significant. The judgement made will depend on the specific circumstances being considered. Refer to Appendix 1 for further details.

Consultation

- 2.6 The LVIA has been scoped on the basis of previous engagement with Wrexham Borough Council and statutory consultees relating to previous development proposals at the Kronospan site. Part of this previous work included the identification

of a series of viewpoint locations, which give a comprehensive coverage of locations and receptor types within the Study Area.

Limitations

- 2.7 Viewpoint photography used in the LVIA was taken in December 2020 and January 2022 and reflects the vegetation cover present at this time of year. As such, the assessment of visual effects has been undertaken on a worst case basis that does not reflect the presence of deciduous foliage during the summer months.

3 Baseline

Data Collection

- 3.1 Baseline data for the LVIA has been gathered by both desk and field based surveys. These have included review of extant landscape character assessment studies (see below) and field visits to gain an understanding of the landscape and visual context of the Site.

Baseline Conditions

The Site and its Surroundings

- 3.2 The Proposed Development would be located within the existing Kronospan site, which covers an area of approximately 40.2 hectares at the western edge of Chirk.
- 3.3 The Proposed Development would be located close to the eastern boundary of the wider Kronospan site, within an area currently occupied by an existing building, access road and other hardstanding, and associated landscaping. The existing main warehouse buildings directly adjoins the Proposed Development to the north, north-east and west. The principal internal access road at the Kronospan site runs immediately south of the Proposed Development. The site boundary to the north and east of where the Proposed Development would be located is defined by dense tree cover, which provides very effective screening of views from the surrounding area. The eastern boundary of the site is with the B5070 Holyhead Road, and in addition to the aforementioned tree cover, an earth bund approximately 5m high is located at the boundary (with planting along its length). Views into the Site from the B5070 are available through the site entrance, but these are heavily filtered by tree cover inside the entrance.

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- 3.4 The wider Kronospan site includes a number of large industrial process buildings (some with emissions stacks), storage areas for raw materials, warehouse buildings, offices and car parking. Some of the existing structures are large in scale and height. The tallest structures on site are the CHP emissions stack (70m), the WESP stack (65.5m), the MDF cyclones (57m), and the dryer exhaust stack at the WESP Chip Dryer (50m). Emission plumes from these stacks are often clearly visible from the surrounding area.
- 3.5 Chirk is a small town located off the A5 and just north of the England-Wales border (within Wales). The residential areas of the town mostly lie east of the B5070, with the wider Kronospan site to the west of this road. As such, there are a series of two-storey residential properties located along the eastern side of the B5070, that have frontages facing that part of the wider Kronospan site where the Proposed Development would be located. The earth bund and tree cover described above provide very effective screening of views, and only occasional glimpses of existing structures within the wider Kronospan site are available from the properties.
- 3.6 To the north the wider Kronospan site adjoins agricultural land. To the west, the wider Kronospan site is bordered by a railway line which is paralleled on its western side by the Llangollen Canal. Both the railway and canal run in a north-south orientation. To the south, the wider Kronospan site borders an area of public open space and other industrial uses. Chirk town centre lies south-east of the wider Kronospan site and includes various commercial and community buildings and areas of public open space.
- 3.7 The wider area around the wider Kronospan site is rural. The landform falls steeply, from the hills to the west towards the much lower-lying Shropshire Plain to the east. Local variations in topography are evident, with a marked rise to a ridge east of the town.
- 3.8 To the west of the wider Kronospan site the land rises towards the foothills of the Berwyn Range of mountains. The Llangollen Canal forms part of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site (WHS). Beyond the canal, settlement is sparse and land cover comprises a mixture of pasture and small woodlands. Chirk Castle and its associated grounds (Grade 1 registered) are a notable feature within the landscape. Several public footpaths lead up to the castle. The Offa's Dyke Path National Trail runs in a broadly north-south direction further to the west, with views

available east over the lower ground; the path does not always follow the line of Offa's Dyke (a historic boundary earthwork) in this area.

- 3.9 To the north, the land undulates before falling into the steep valley of the River Dee some 2.5km north of the wider Kronospan site. The canal (WHS) runs due north before turning westwards along the southern lip of the valley. The northern side of the valley is urbanised, with a string of contiguous small villages at Cefn.
- 3.10 To the east, the undulating agricultural landscape extends for some 3km before falling sharply into the valley of the River Ceiriog. The A5 corridor runs north-south in what is almost a straight line along a ridge top approximately 1.5km east of the wider Kronospan site. The Brynkinallt estate (registered park and garden) is bisected by the road. The wholly separate Brynkinallt Park lies west of the road, at the eastern edge of Chirk, on reclaimed colliery land.
- 3.11 The steep sided valley of the River Ceiriog cuts through the surrounding hills 1.5km to the south of the wider Kronospan site. Parts of the valley slopes are well wooded. The Llangollen Canal crosses the valley via the Chirk Aqueduct, which forms part of the WHS. The Ceiriog Trail recreational route runs along the southern lip of the valley. Several small settlements lie to the south of the valley, such as Weston Rhyn and Bronygarth.

Landscape Designations

- 3.12 As stated in Section 1 above, the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB is located approximately 300m west of the wider Kronospan site at the closest point (refer to Figure 1 for location). The Chirk Castle estate is located within the AONB.
- 3.13 The special qualities of the AONB are set out in the *Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Management Plan 2014-2019* (undated) as follows:
- Tranquility;
 - Remoteness and Wildness, Space and Freedom;
 - Heather Moorland and Rolling ridges;
 - Broadleaved woodlands and veteran trees;
 - River Valleys and the River Dee;
 - Limestone grasslands, cliffs and screes;
 - Historic Settlement and Archaeology;

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- Industrial Features and the World Heritage Site;
 - Historic Defence Features;
 - Small historic features;
 - Traditional boundaries;
 - Iconic Visitor and Cultural Attractions;
 - The Offa's Dyke National Trail and Promoted Routes;
 - The Built Environment; and
 - People and Communities

3.14 The area west of the wider Kronospan site, beyond the railway, lies within the non-statutory local-level Special Landscape Area (SLA) designation. This designation is protected by a policy in the Unitary Development Plan and is underpinned by *Background Paper 7: Special Landscape Areas* (Wrexham Borough Council 2010), a document prepared to inform the production of the next iteration of local development plans.

3.15 UDP Policy EC5 states that [**emphasis added**]:

"Within Special Landscape Areas, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Development, other than for agriculture, small-scale farm-based and other rural enterprises, and essential operational development by utility service providers, will be strictly controlled. Development will be required to conform to a high standard of design and landscaping and special attention will be paid to minimising its visual impact from both nearby and distant viewpoints."

3.16 The Proposed Development does not lie within the SLA.

Landscape Character Assessment and Related Studies

3.17 LANDMAP is the formally adopted methodology for landscape assessment in Wales and, as such, forms the baseline for this assessment. The *Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance* (adopted 2007) subdivides the Borough into a series of four broad landscape types and twenty-seven geographically distinct landscape character areas (LCA).

3.18 The Proposed Development would be located within the Rural/Urban Villages landscape type and within LCA 7a: Chirk. The land to the west of the Site (west of the canal) is located within the Uplands landscape type and within LCA 5a: Chirk Estate to Froncysyllte. Extracts from the SPG, detailing these LCAs are included as

Appendix 2. The influence and visual dominance of industrial structures upon LCA 7a is specifically noted in the SPG.

Future Landscape Change

- 3.19 The site of the Proposed Development would be located within the much larger Kronospan site. It seems reasonable to assume that, irrespective of the presence/absence of the Proposed Development, that there would be some degree of change within the wider Site as buildings are replaced to accommodate new industrial processes, or otherwise refurbished, and new items of plant introduced to the Site, reflecting changes in technology or working practices.

Visual Baseline

- 3.20 As noted in Section 2 above, a series of eighteen viewpoints were identified and agreed with Wrexham County Council (and other consultees where necessary) as part of work related to the assessment of previous development proposals at the wider Kronospan site.
- 3.21 Given its position at the south-eastern corner of an existing structure of the same height and form, and due to the way that the new covered loading yard would infill an existing gap, it is clear that visibility of the Proposed Development would be very limited. The degree of screening provided by landform and vegetation cover, and the presence of other far larger structures nearby within the wider Kronospan site, makes it clear that significant visual effects would not occur from most of the viewpoints identified for previous assessments. Seventeen of the eighteen viewpoints have thus been scoped out of this LVIA.
- 3.22 One new viewpoint location was identified in order to reflect potential changes in view from the B5070 Holyhead Road to the east of the Site.
- 3.23 As such, a total of two viewpoints have been included in the LVIA, reflecting more sensitive receptors located closer to the Proposed Development. Locations are illustrated on Figure 1. The locations of the viewpoints scoped out of the LVIA are also illustrated on the Figure.
- 3.24 Viewpoints fall into three categories, as set out in the GLVIA:
- Representative viewpoints (which represent the experience of different types of receptors in the vicinity);

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- Specific viewpoints (a particular view, for example a well-known beauty spot);
 - Illustrative viewpoints (which illustrate a particular effect/issue, which may include limited/lack of visibility).
- 3.25 It should be noted that the viewpoint itself is not the receptor; rather it is the people that would be experiencing the view from the viewpoint. Receptors in the vicinity of the Site that are likely to experience views of the Proposed Development include:
- Local residents; and
 - Road and rail users
- 3.26 Figures 2a-b include baseline photography from each viewpoint, which is annotated where deemed appropriate to highlight key features. The photographs were taken in December 2020 and January 2022, using a Canon EOS 5D Mark II digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera with a full-frame sensor, using a 50mm lens. The precise location of each photograph was recorded using a hand-held Garmin Oregon 600 GPS device (which has an accuracy of approximately 3m). Following the Site visit, the GPS data was loaded into Google Earth, to double check that the GPS recording was accurate.
- 3.27 In relation to the requirements of the current Landscape Institute visualisation guidance¹, Figures 2a-b are Type 1 visualisations (annotated photographs).
- 3.28 The viewpoints included in the LVIA are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Viewpoints Included in the LVIA

Viewpoint	British National Grid Co-ordinates	Viewpoint Details
A: Chirk Recreation Ground	329022, 337810	<i>Representative</i> of views from public open space in Chirk village centre
S: B5070, opposite Kronospan site entrance	329024, 338309	<i>Representative</i> of views available to road users

¹ Landscape Institute, 2019. *Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Technical Guidance Note 06/19*

Cumulative Development

3.29 A series of new or improved facilities at the wider Kronospan site are proposed as part of Kronospan Vision 2020. This comprises several major projects, the following of which are operational or under construction:

- Log yard silos and RCF offloading and grading facilities;
- Melamine facing press hall/ building; and
- Wood Chip Preparation Building and WSEP Chip Dryer;
- Refurbishment of Existing Chipper Facility;
- Raw Board Storage (under construction).

3.30 The presence of these five schemes forms part of the main LVIA baseline.

3.31 Three projects benefit from planning consent, but have yet to be built. These are therefore cumulative schemes:

- Log Offloading and Flaker Facility (new building of maximum height 2.1m, and associated trackside cranes and conveyors);
- Oriented Strand Board (OSB) Facility (vertical extension to an existing building, with an increased maximum height of 28m, and a new building of maximum height of 33.2m);
- North-east Warehouse (new warehouse at the north-eastern edge of the Site, with a maximum roof height of 11.5m) – a resolution to grant planning commission has been made by Wrexham County Borough Council, but this is subject to a Section 106 Agreement which is yet to be finalised.

3.32 The cumulative assessment set out in Section 4 is concerned with the effects of the Proposed Development based upon a further cumulative baseline scenario where the three schemes listed above are also present.

4 Assessment of Effects

Construction

4.1 The Proposed Development would be located within a large industrial site, where the movement of vehicles, stockpiling of materials and operation of plant are inherent characteristics, and where construction activity relating to other facilities within the wider site is already a familiar influence.

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- 4.2 Construction activity associated with the Proposed Development would be experienced in the context of the operational Site, and would have little or no influence upon the character of the surrounding landscape or upon views, both of which are already influenced by the extensive and sometimes tall industrial structures present. As such, construction stage effects would not be significant.

Landscape Effects: Operational

Effects on Landscape Fabric

- 4.3 The Proposed Development would comprise a new covered loading yard. The Proposed Development would be sited wholly within the wider Kronospan site where similar structures, buildings and materials stockpiles are already present. The Proposed Development would be located largely within an existing area of hardstanding, with some landscaping around the existing office building.
- 4.4 Change to the physical fabric of the Site would be limited. Whilst there would some loss of vegetation as a result of the removal of the landscaping around the existing office building, the eastern perimeter of the wider Kronospan site would continue to be defined by an extensive belt of dense tree cover. Effects on fabric would be adverse, but would not be significant.

Effects on Landscape Character

- 4.5 A detailed assessment of effects upon the character of LCA5a: Chirk Estate to Froncysyllte and LCA7a: Chirk is set out in Appendix 3. In both LCAs, the effects of the Proposed Development would be similar.
- 4.6 In summary, the Proposed Development would comprise a relatively limited extension to the existing main warehouse building. Due to its location within the wider Kronospan site relative to existing larger structures, and due to the surrounding landform and pattern of vegetation cover (and in particular the existing bund and tree cover immediately to the east along the Holyhead Road boundary), the Proposed Development would be very well screened, even at short range, and would be difficult to make out as a distinct feature separate from the existing assemblage of structures. The overall influence of the Kronospan site upon its surroundings would not change, and hence there would be no effect upon landscape character.

Visual Effects: Operational

- 4.7 A detailed assessment of visual effects at the two viewpoints included in the LVIA is set out in Appendix 4. The viewpoints cover a range of receptor types within the study area, and reflect views towards the Proposed Development from a range of different directions.
- 4.8 In summary, neither of the viewpoints would experience significant visual effects. The Proposed Development would not be visible from Viewpoint A. At Viewpoint S, effects would be minor adverse at worst.
- 4.9 The Proposed Development would be very well screened by a combination of landform, vegetation cover and existing structures, and as such, would not be widely visible. The earth bund and the tree planting along the eastern boundary of the wider Kronospan site would provide very effective screening of views of the Proposed Development from along the B5070 Holyhead Road, and at worst only glimpses of the new covered loading yard would be available from the vicinity of the site entrance. The existing main warehouse building to the north, north-east and west would screen views from those directions, and existing tree cover to the south would also provide screening. As such, the Proposed Development would be unlikely to be clearly visible from any location outside of the Kronospan site.
- 4.10 The Proposed Development would typically result in only a minor change to the arrangement of elements within the wider site. Several of the existing structures are far larger than the Proposed Development in terms of height, mass, floorspace, or all three. As such, the Proposed Development would generally have little or no appreciable effect upon the long-established existing influence of the Kronospan site upon views. There would be a slight localised increase in the influence of built development in views from Holyhead Road, but change in view would be small scale, with the new building well screened by tree cover.

Effects on Landscape Designations

- 4.11 It should be noted that the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB was extended in 2011 to cover the area west of the Kronospan site, and that the Kronospan site was present when this extension took place. The presence of large-scale industrial structures at Kronospan did not preclude the inclusion of land a short distance west of the Site within the AONB.

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- 4.12 As noted above, neither the landscape effects nor the visual effects of the Proposed Development would be significant. As such, it follows that the presence of the Proposed Development would not have a material effect upon either the statutory purposes or the special qualities of the AONB. The presence of the Kronospan facility is an established part of the context of the south-eastern edge of the AONB (i.e. the area around Chirk), and the addition of the Proposed Development would not materially increase this influence upon the designation. Indeed, it is unlikely that the Proposed Development would be apparent at all from land within the AONB.

Cumulative Effects

- 4.13 In a scenario where the four consented cumulative schemes set out in Section 3 are present, this would incrementally increase the well-established influence of the wider Kronospan site upon the surrounding landscape and upon views. Their presence would not however open up any views towards the Proposed Development, which would continue to be well screened by existing structures, by vegetation cover and by landform.
- 4.14 As such, the effects of the Proposed Development would not materially differ from those described above. Cumulative effects would not be significant.

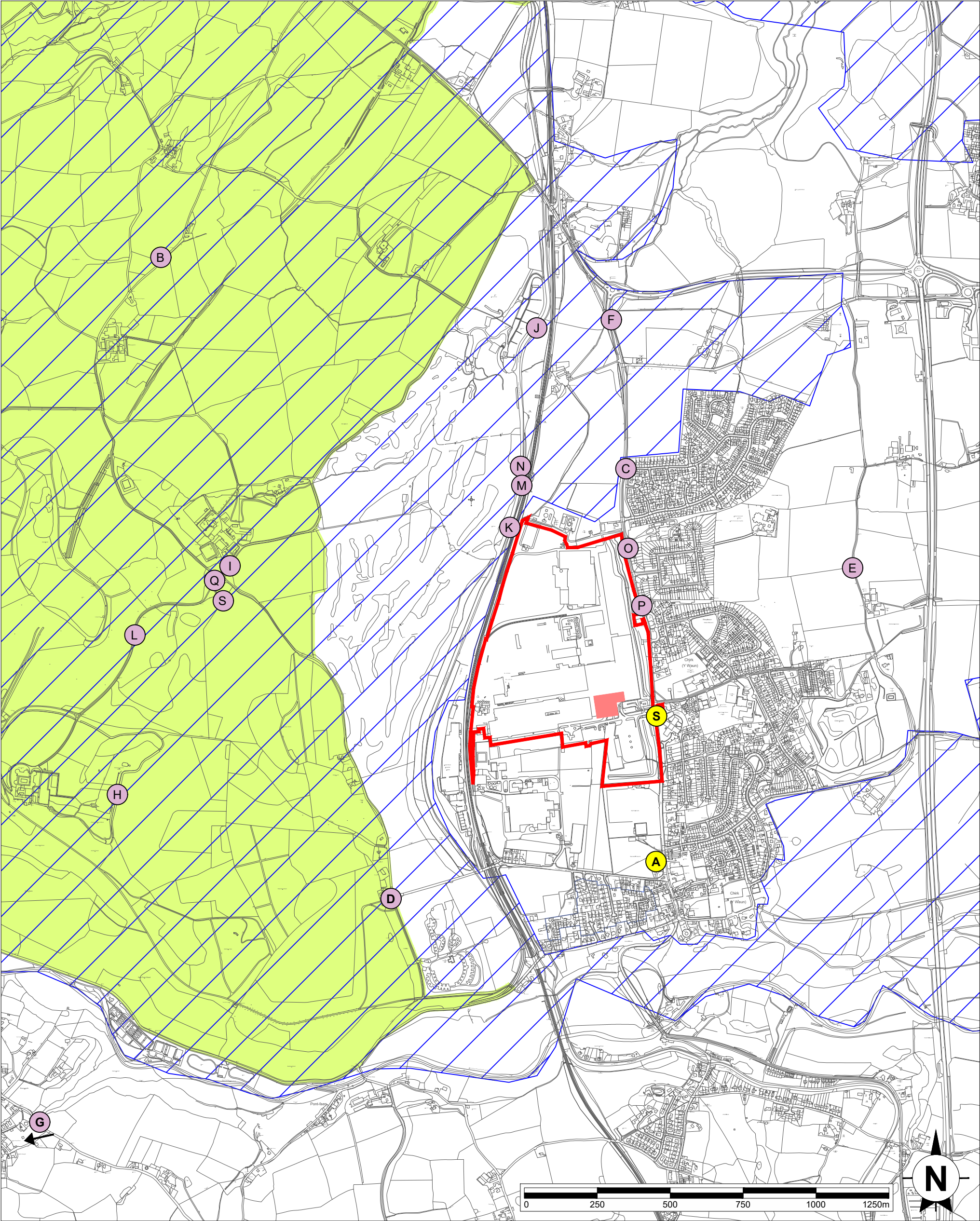
5 Mitigation

- 5.1 As the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would not be significant, no specific mitigation measures are deemed necessary.
- 5.2 A scheme to provide new planting elsewhere within the Kronospan landholding would be developed by the Applicant. Such a scheme could potentially be agreed with Wrexham County Borough Council via planning condition.
- 5.3 It should also be noted that, independent of this planning application, the Applicant submitted a landscape strategy for the area surrounding the Kronospan site in May 2017. The purpose of the landscape strategy is to identify and then implement opportunities for enhanced screening of the Kronospan site via new off-site planting and changes to the management of existing vegetation. The landscape strategy was approved by Wrexham County Borough Council in 2019.
- 5.4 The implementation of the landscape strategy has commenced and this is likely to result in some reduction in the visibility of the Kronospan site generally over time.

6 Residual Effects and Conclusions

- 6.1 The Proposed Development would be introduced into an existing large-scale industrial site that is an established influence upon the town of Chirk and the surrounding rural area. Views of existing tall, bulky structures at the Kronospan site are commonplace within the study area and their presence is an established part of the character of the landscape. In comparison, the Proposed Development would be a much smaller structure, and would be well screened by other structures, by the screening bund along Holyhead Road to the east, and by retained tree cover to the east and south. The Proposed Development would be an unremarkable addition that is unlikely to be clearly visible from outside of the Kronospan site boundary, and which would result in little or no appreciable change to existing influence of the Kronospan site upon its surroundings. Neither the landscape effects nor the visual effects of the Proposed Development would be significant.

FIGURES



	Key:		Kronospan Covered Loading Yard	
		Location of Proposed Development		Viewpoint included in the LVIA
		Kronospan Site Boundary		Viewpoint scoped out of the LVIA
		Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Figure 1	
		Special Landscape Area	Landscape and Visual Context	
Scale 1:12,500@A3			Date February 2022	



Print on paper at the following size. 841mm width x 420mm height (A1 width x A3 height)
View at a comfortable arm's length

Existing View



Print on paper at the following size. 841mm width x 420mm height (A1 width x A3 height)
View at a comfortable arm's length

Existing View

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to systematically identify and assess the nature and significance of the effects of a proposed development upon the landscape and upon views and visual amenity. The purpose of the LVIA is to identify the level and nature of effect arising from a proposed development and if necessary, through an iterative design process, to inform changes to the development and evolution of mitigation strategies which minimise significant effects wherever possible.
- 1.2 The methodology for this LVIA is informed by guidance contained within the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment, 3rd Edition, 2013), often referred to as 'the GLVIA'. The LVIA aims to establish the following:
- A clear understanding of the development site and its context, in respect of the physical and perceived landscape and of views and visual amenity;
 - An understanding of the proposed development in terms of how this would relate to the existing landscape and views;
 - An identification of likely significant effects of the proposed development upon the landscape and upon views, throughout the life-cycle of the development, including cumulative interactions with other developments;
 - Those mitigation measures necessary to reduce/eliminate any potential adverse effect on the landscape or views arising as a result of the proposed development; and
 - A conclusion as to the residual likely significant effects of the proposed development.
- 1.3 Professional judgement is a very important part of the LVIA process at every stage of the assessment. This judgement must be exercised within an assessment framework that transparently sets out the steps in the assessment process which have led to the overall conclusions. This is emphasised in Box 3.1 (page 37) of the GLVIA, which advocates a structured approach that considers the sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of the effect when determining if an effect is significant or not.

- 1.4 To ensure the transparency of the assessment and professional judgements made, the LVIA follows a standard approach, namely:
- The establishment of the baseline conditions, against which the effects of the proposed development will be assessed;
 - The determination of the nature of the receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its sensitivity;
 - The prediction of the nature of the effect likely to occur, i.e. the magnitude of change; and
 - An assessment of whether a likely significant effect would occur upon any receptor, by considering the predicted magnitude of change together with the sensitivity of the receptor, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures.
- 1.5 The GLVIA clarifies that the guidance concentrates on
[1.20] “...principles while also seeking to steer specific approaches where there is a general consensus on methods and techniques. It is not intended to be prescriptive, in that it does not provide a detailed ‘recipe’ that can be followed in every situation. It is always the primary responsibility of any landscape professional carrying out an assessment to ensure that the approach and methodology adopted are appropriate to the particular circumstance”.
- 1.6 As set out above, use of professional judgement within a structured assessment framework is a very important element of the assessment of landscape and visual effects. As discussed in the GLVIA:
[2.23] “...Whilst there is some scope for quantitative measurement of some relatively objective matters, ...much of the assessment must rely on qualitative judgement, for example about what effect the introduction of a new development or land use change may have on visual amenity, or about the significance of change in the character of the landscape and whether it is positive or negative”.
[2.24] “...In all cases there is a need for the judgements that are made to be reasonable and based on clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others...”
[2.26] “...In carrying out an LVIA the landscape professional must always take an independent stance, and fully and transparently address both the negative and positive effects of a scheme in a way that is accessible and reliable for all parties concerned”.

- 1.7 Landscape and visual matters are separate, although closely related and interlinked issues, and are dealt with as such throughout the LVIA. The methodologies for assessing both are outlined separately below.

2.0 Landscape Assessment

- 2.1 The landscape assessment considers the potential effects of the proposed development on the components of the landscape as an environmental resource. Landscape receptors which could be affected by a proposed development may include:

- Individual constituent elements and features of the landscape (sometimes referred to as landscape fabric);
- Specific aesthetic and perceptual qualities of the landscape;
- The overall character and key characteristics of the landscape as experienced in different areas (e.g. landscape character areas or types).

Sensitivity

- 2.2 The nature of a landscape receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its **sensitivity** is determined by considering two factors, namely:

- Susceptibility to change; and
- Value.

Susceptibility to Change

- 2.3 Susceptibility to change is defined in the GLVIA as follows:

[5.40] *“This means the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies”*

[5.41] *“The assessment may take place in situations where there are existing landscape sensitivity and capacity studies, which have become increasingly common. They may deal with the general type of development that is proposed, in*

which case they may provide useful preliminary background information for assessment. But they cannot provide a substitute for the individual assessment of the susceptibility of the receptors in relation to change arising from the specific development proposal".

2.4 To understand susceptibility to change, the various characteristics/factors that make up a particular landscape must be identified and consideration given as to how these will be affected by the proposed development. Consideration is given to physical and perceptual factors which are considered together to derive an overall susceptibility to change. Factors influencing the susceptibility of a landscape to change resulting from *industrial buildings and plant* are set out below:

- **Scale:** A larger scale landscape (relative to the development proposed) will typically be less susceptible than a smaller scale landscape;
- **Pattern/Complexity:** The susceptibility of a receiving landscape to change will be influenced by the specific pattern of features and elements present and by the complexity of this pattern;
- **Development/Human Influence:** A landscape that includes obvious alterations to natural ground levels, contemporary development, or that is clearly functional/ utilitarian in land use will typically be less susceptible than one where development is more traditional in style, or where natural influences and natural, or long-established landforms are predominant;
- **Connections with adjacent areas:** A landscape which has a clear relationship with other surrounding landscapes, for example in relation to views in and out will typically be more susceptible than one where such relationships are not present;
- **Visual Interruption:** A landscape where views are frequently interrupted by screening features, for example vegetation cover or variations in landform will typically be less susceptible than one where there are few/no screening features.

2.5 A particular landscape may have different characteristics that are more or less susceptible to change. As such, the overall susceptibility to change allocated using professional judgement based upon consideration of the various factors outlined above and the relative weight attached to these (which will vary from landscape to landscape). The assessment of susceptibility is expressed using a three point verbal scale of high, medium or low. Where appropriate, intermediate levels such

as medium/high or low/medium are used to refine the assessment. The rationale in support of the assessment of susceptibility is set out for each receptor in the assessment, so that it is clear how each judgement has been made.

Value

- 2.6 The value of the landscape receptor is independent of any development proposal. The absence of a formal landscape designation does not necessarily imply that a landscape is of lower value. Value is defined in the GLVIA as:

[5.19] “...*the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons...Landscapes or their component parts may be valued at the community, local, national or international levels...*”

- 2.7 Factors that can help in identifying valued landscapes include:

- Presence/absence of statutory landscape designations;
- Presence/absence of local landscape designations and associated policies;
- Landscape quality/condition;
- Scenic quality;
- Rarity of particular elements/features;
- Representativeness;
- Conservation interest;
- Recreation value;
- Perceptual aspects; and
- Cultural associations.

- 2.8 The assessment of value is expressed on a similar basis to that described for susceptibility of change above. Table 2.1 indicates how the above factors have been used to determine landscape value.

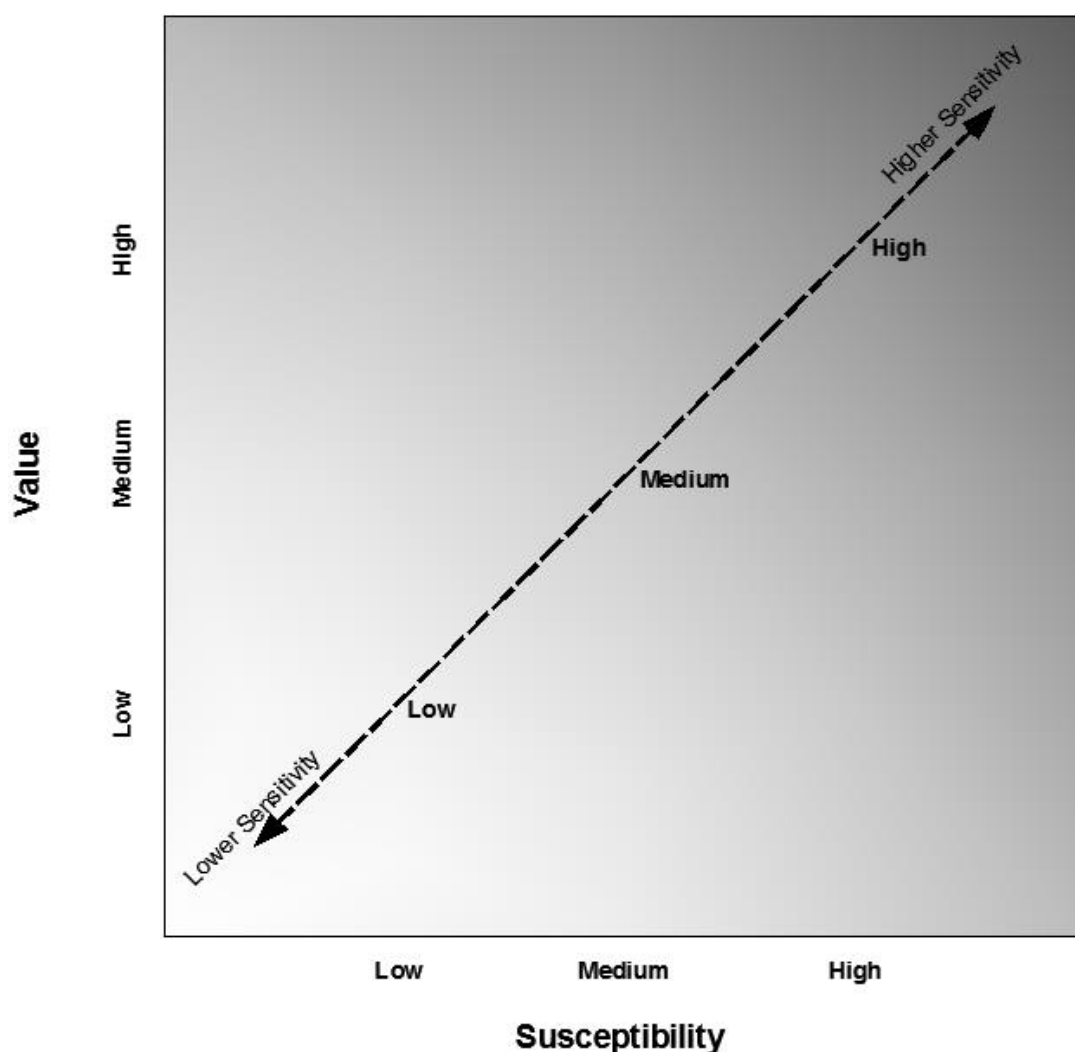
Table 2.1: Landscape Value Criteria

	Criteria tending towards higher or lower value	
	Higher ←	→ Lower
Value	Unique, and/or strongly positive landscape character, often with strong associations or (non-landscape) environmental designations. Nationally designated landscape (protected by statute).	Widespread or common landscape character. Negative character. Lack of other environmental qualities Landscape without formal designation and with limited positive contribution to the locality

Sensitivity

- 2.9 Susceptibility to change and value are considered together to determine the sensitivity of the receptor. It should be noted that the relationship between susceptibility to change and value can be complex and is not linear. For example a highly valued landscape (such as a National Park) may have a low susceptibility to change, due both to the characteristics of the landscape and the nature of the change proposed. Table 2.2 below provides a guide as to how susceptibility and value can be combined to assess sensitivity (with the grey shading indicative of the increasing sensitivity of receptors with increasing susceptibility and/or value). However, the final assessment of sensitivity is one of professional judgement based on consideration of the susceptibility and value assessments.

Table 2.2: Indicative Sensitivity Assessment



Magnitude

- 2.10 The nature of the effect that is likely to occur, i.e. its **magnitude**, is determined by considering four separate factors, namely:
- Size/scale;
 - Geographical extent;
 - Duration;
 - Reversibility.
- 2.11 The size and scale of an effect is determined by considering the amount of change experienced by a receptor, including:

- The extent of existing landscape elements that would be lost, the proportion of the total extent that this represents; and the contribution of that element to the wider character;
- The degree to which aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscapes are altered by the removal, or introduction of new landscape components;
- Whether change affects the key characteristics of a landscape.

2.12 The geographical extent of an effect is the area over which effects will be experienced. It is not the same as size/scale, as a small-scale change may be experienced over a wider area, or vice-versa.

2.13 The duration of an effect simply relates to the length of time for which it would be experienced, as follows:

- Long-term: 10+ years; or the change could not reasonably be considered temporary in nature;
- Medium-term: 3-10 years; and
- Short-term: 0-3 years.

2.14 The reversibility of an effect relates to the prospects and practicality of an effect being able to be wholly or partially reversed, or whether the change cannot realistically be reversed, i.e. it is permanent.

2.15 These four factors are then considered together to derive an overall magnitude of change for each receptor, which is determined by use of professional judgement. The assessment of the magnitude of change is expressed using a four point verbal scale of large, medium, small or negligible. Where appropriate, intermediate levels such as medium/large or small/medium are used to refine the assessment. Table 2.3 indicates how the above factors have been used to inform magnitude of change. As the circumstances of each specific receptor will vary, a reasoned narrative is set out in the LVIA in order to justify the particular magnitude of change allocated to each receptor.

Table 2.3: Magnitude of Landscape Change Criteria (indicative)

Magnitude	Description
Large	A substantial change in landscape characteristics and/or over extensive geographical area and/or which may result in an irreversible landscape impact.
Medium	A moderate change in landscape characteristics and/or which may be over a large geographical area, and/or which may be reversible over a long duration of time.
Small	A small change in landscape characteristics and/or which may be over a relatively localised geographical area, and/or which may be reversible over a short duration of time.
Negligible	A barely perceptible change in landscape characteristics and/or which is focused on a small geographical area, and/or which is almost or completely reversible.

3.0 Visual Assessment

3.1 A visual assessment is concerned with the potential effects upon the population likely to be affected (i.e. the views experienced by people). As for landscape effects (Section 2.0), the sensitivity of the receptor affected is identified, as is the magnitude of the change that would occur. These are then considered together to determine the level and significance of effect.

3.2 A key part of the visual assessment is the assessment of effects from a number of predetermined viewpoints, which reflect views available to different groups of people. The viewpoint itself is not the receptor; rather it is the people that would be experiencing the view. These people will generally have different responses to a change in view depending upon their location, their activity, and other factors, including the weather and time of day/year. Viewpoints fall into three categories(as set out in the GLVIA):

- Representative viewpoints (which represent the experience of different types of receptors in the vicinity);
- Specific viewpoints (a particular view, for example a well-known beauty spot);
- Illustrative viewpoints (which illustrate a particular effect/issue, which may include limited/lack of visibility).

- 3.3 Private viewpoints, such as from specific residential properties are not typically included in the LVIA. It is often impractical to visit all affected properties and access to private land may not be granted. Representative or specific viewpoints from nearby publicly accessible locations can often give an impression of what effects from private land would be.

Sensitivity

- 3.4 The nature of a visual receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its **sensitivity** is determined by considering two factors, namely:
- Susceptibility to change;
 - Value.

Susceptibility to Change

- 3.5 The GLVIA identifies susceptibility to change in view/visual amenity as:
[6.32] “...mainly a function of:
- *The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations; and*
 - *The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations”.*
- 3.6 Susceptibility to change is, in part, classified based upon the indicative criteria, provided in the GLVIA, as set out in Table 3.1 over the page.

Table 3.1: Typical Visual Susceptibility to Change Criteria (indicative)

Criteria Level	Description
<i>Susceptibility to Change</i>	
High	Residents at home; People engaged in outdoor recreation, whose attention/interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views, including from public rights of way; Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience; Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents; Travellers on scenic routes.
Medium	Travellers on road, rail, or other transport routes.
Low	People engaged in outdoor sport/recreation which does not involve/depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape; People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work/activity and not their surroundings.

- 3.7 It is important to note that the examples set out in GLVIA and Table 3.1 above only address the first bullet point and part of the second bullet point in paragraph 3.5 above (which are focussed on the occupation or activity of the people and the extent to which their attention is focussed on the view).
- 3.8 As such, the assessment of susceptibility in Table 3.1 and GLVIA (pages 113 &114) needs to be adjusted to reflect the requirements of the final part of the second bullet point, namely the visual amenity that people currently experience. GLVIA identifies clearly that the division between categories of susceptibility to change:
[6.35] “...is not black and white and in reality there will be a gradation in susceptibility to change. Each project needs to consider the nature of the groups of people who will be affected and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focused on views and visual amenity...”
- 3.9 For example, the presence of existing detracting features in any given view may reduce the visual amenity of those experiencing the view. This may therefore reduce their susceptibility to certain types of change and ultimately their sensitivity.
- 3.10 The assessment of susceptibility to change is made on the same basis as for landscape effects (Section 2.0 above). A three point scale (with intermediate levels where appropriate) is used, supported by a reasoned narrative that explains the judgement made.

Value

- 3.11 In accordance with paragraph 6.37 of the GLVIA when considering the value of a view experienced, this should take account of:
- Recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations;
 - Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or on tourist maps, provision of facilities for their enjoyment and references to them in literature or art.
- 3.12 For this reason, whilst not specifically referenced in the current edition of GLVIA, the number of people likely to be affected can influence the value assigned to a particular view.
- 3.13 The assessment of value is made on the same basis as the assessment of susceptibility of change.

Sensitivity

- 3.14 Susceptibility to change and value are considered together as discussed above for landscape sensitivity and illustrated above on Table 2.2. Again, professional judgement determines the final judgement of sensitivity, due to the non-linear and complex relationship between susceptibility and value. A reasoned narrative is set out in the LVIA in order to justify the particular sensitivity assessed for each receptor, so that it is clear how each judgement has been made.

Magnitude

- 3.15 The nature of the visual effect that is likely to occur, i.e. its **magnitude**, is determined by considering four separate factors, namely:
- Size/scale;
 - Geographical extent;
 - Duration;
 - Reversibility.

- 3.16 The size and scale of an effect is determined by considering the following:
- The scale of change in view, in respect of the loss of or addition of features, and change in composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the development;
 - The degree of contrast or integration of new features or other changes;
 - The nature of the view, namely the relative amount of time it would be experienced for and whether the views would be full, partial or glimpsed.
- 3.17 The geographical extent of an effect will vary from viewpoint to viewpoint and will reflect the following:
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
 - The distance from the proposed development;
 - The extent over which change in view would be visible.
- 3.18 The duration of an effect simply relates to the length of time for which it would be experienced, as follows:
- Long-term: 10+ years; or the change could not reasonably be considered temporary in nature;
 - Medium-term: 3-10 years; and
 - Short-term: 0-3 years.
- 3.19 The reversibility of an effect relates to the prospects and practicality of an effect being able to be wholly or partially reversed, or whether the change cannot realistically be reversed, i.e. it is permanent.
- 3.20 These four factors are then considered together to derive an overall magnitude of change for each receptor, which is determined by use of professional judgement. The assessment of the magnitude of change is expressed using a four point verbal scale of large, medium, small or negligible. Where appropriate, intermediate levels such as medium/large or small/medium are used to refine the assessment. Table 3.2 (over the page) indicates how the above factors have been used to inform magnitude of change. As the circumstances of each specific receptor will vary, a reasoned narrative is set out in the LVIA in order to justify the particular magnitude of change allocated to each receptor.

Table 3.2: Magnitude of Visual Change Criteria (indicative)

Magnitude	Description
Large	A change affecting a large proportion of a view, which may be seen across an extensive area or experienced from a long section of a route, and/or a longer-term effect, and/or contrasting with the existing view.
Medium	A change affecting a moderate proportion of a view, which may be seen across a wider area or experienced from a section of a route, and/or a medium-term effect, and/or broadly compatible with the existing view.
Small	A change affecting a smaller proportion of a view, which may be seen from a limited area or experienced from a short section of a route, and/or a shorter-term effect, and/or compatible with the existing view.
Negligible	A change which is barely perceptible in the view, and/or which is only glimpsed from a route.

4.0 Level and Significance of Effect

4.1 The purpose of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is to determine the likely significant effects of a development proposal. Not all landscape and visual effects arising as a result of a particular proposal will be significant. Furthermore, a significant effect does not necessarily mean that such an effect is unacceptable to decision-makers. This is a matter to be weighed in the planning balance alongside other factors. What is important is that the likely effects of any proposal are transparently assessed and described in order that the relevant determining authority can bring a balanced and well-informed judgement to bear as part of the decision-making process.

4.2 *The State of Environmental Impact Assessment Practice in the UK* (Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment 2011) identifies a range of different factors that should be considered when evaluating the significance of an effect, including:

- Knowledge and experience of significance from previous assessments;
- Details of the development proposal, such as construction and operational activities, and the nature of the effect associated with such activity;
- Details about the environmental sensitivity of the area that will be affected;

- Feedback from scoping and consultation;
- The wider legal and policy context, which offers protection to the environment and community.

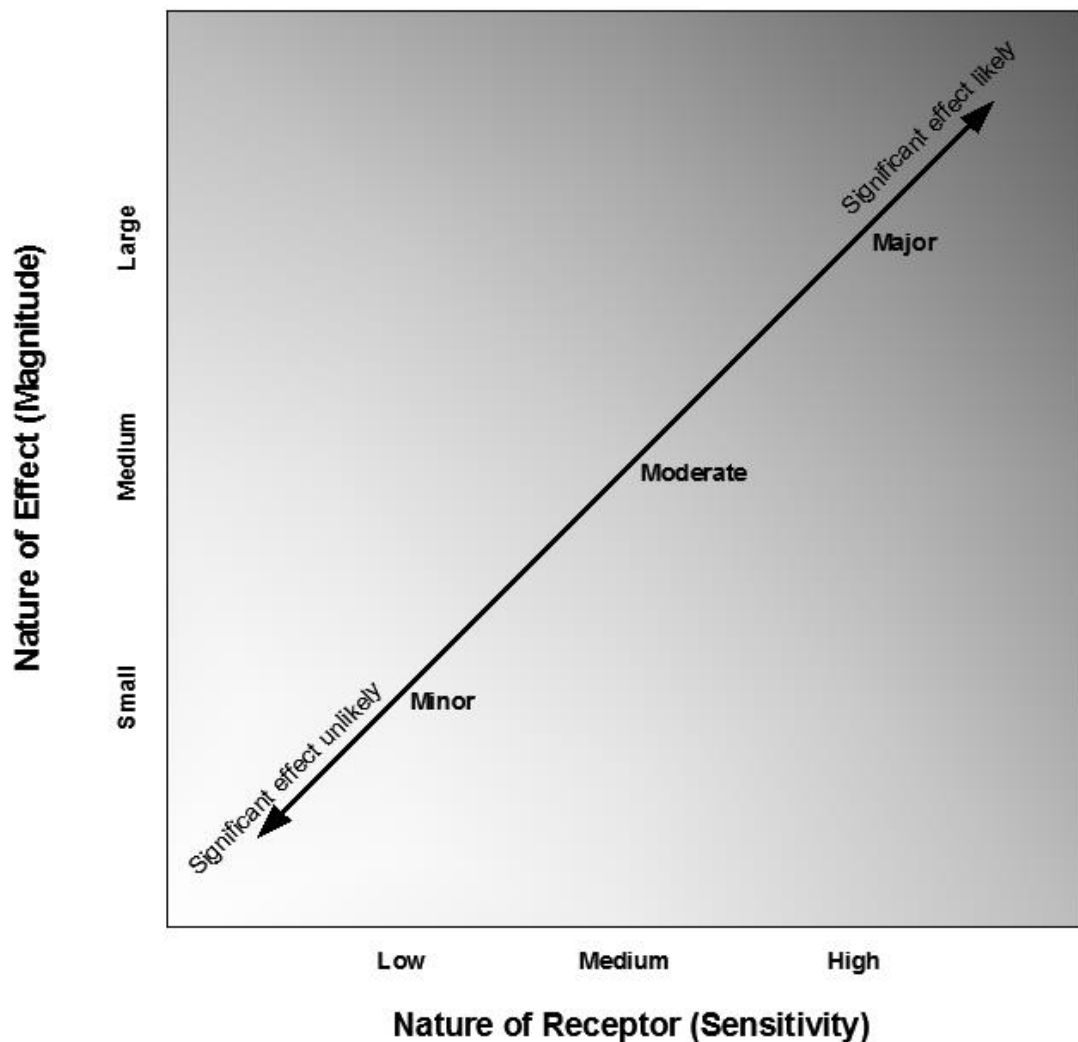
4.3 The level of effect can only be defined in relation to each particular development and its specific location. It is for each LVIA to determine how judgements about receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of change should be combined to derive the level of effect and to clearly explain how this assessment has been made, and if the level of effect is considered significant.

4.4 The matrix in Table 4.1 overleaf provides a guide as to how sensitivity and magnitude can be combined to identify the level of effect upon a receptor (with the grey shading indicative of the increasing level of effect with increasing sensitivity and/or magnitude). However, the final assessment of the level of effect and whether this is significant for decision makers is one of professional judgement.

4.5 Where magnitude of change is identified as 'negligible', then effects are automatically considered not to be significant due to the minimal level of change from baseline (which would often not be perceptible).

4.6 The judgement for this particular assessment is that greater than 'moderate' effects are more likely to be significant. This is because they would generally result from larger magnitudes of change on higher sensitivity receptors. This does not preclude a 'moderate' effect or lower being significant or a greater than 'moderate' effect not being significant. This judgement will depend on the specific circumstances being considered.

Table 4.1: Level of Effect Matrix (indicative)



4.7 The GLVIA identifies that:

[3.32] *“The Regulations require that a final judgement is made about whether or not each effect is likely to be significant. There are no hard and fast rules about what effects should be deemed ‘significant’ but LVIA’s should always distinguish clearly between what are considered to be significant and non-significant effects...*

[3.33] *It is not essential to establish a series of thresholds for different levels of significance of landscape and visual effects, provided that it is made clear whether or not they are considered significant. The final overall judgement of the likely significance of the predicted landscape and visual effects is however, often summarised in a series of categories of significance reflecting combinations of sensitivity and magnitude. These tend to vary from project to project but they should be appropriate to the nature, size and location of the proposed development and should as far as possible be consistent across the different topic areas of the EIA”.*

[5.56] & [6.44] *“There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and [landscape]¹ context and with the type of proposal”.*

- 4.8 It should be noted that effects may be either adverse (negative) or beneficial (positive). An effect can be significant and adverse, or significant and beneficial. If change occurs, with no obvious deterioration or improvement resulting, this can be said to be neutral.

¹ The word landscape is present in paragraph 5.56 of the 3rd edition of GLVIA only. Otherwise, the sentence quoted from paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44 is identical.

Appendix 2: Extracts from the *Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance* (adopted 2007)



Chirk Estate to Froncysyllte 5a

This is one of a series of Local Planning Guidance Notes based on Wrexham LANDMAP (adopted November 2004), setting out recommendations for each Landscape Character area.

East-facing slopes dominated by the strategically sited Chirk Castle and Estate, with the landscape reflecting the historical tensions between upland and lowland, Wales and England

Landscape context

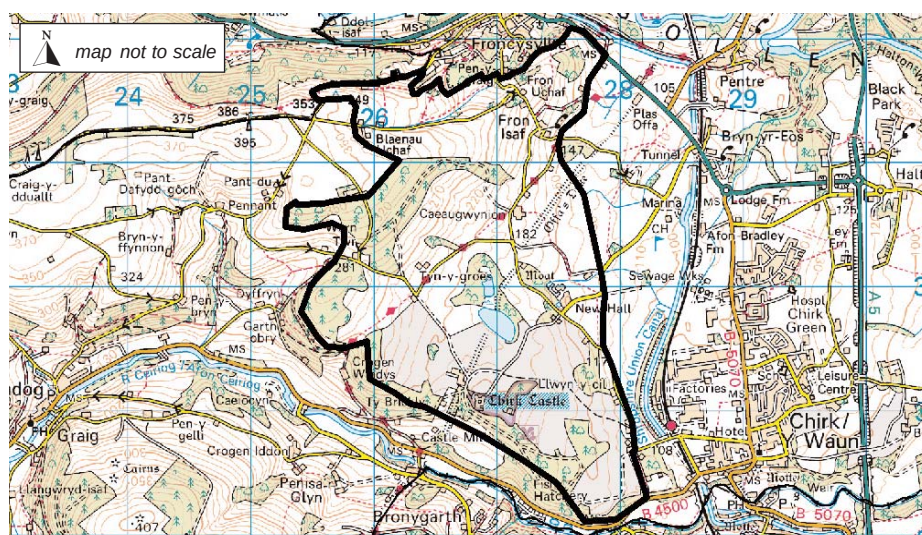
This landscape type lies on the edge of the uplands, but faces the lowlands. There are two such areas in Wrexham, the other being the eastern slopes of Ruabon Mountain. The slopes above Froncysyllte, reflected by the slopes above Trevor, form a gateway to the Vale of Llangollen in Denbighshire. To the south of the character area Chirk Castle stands guard over the steep wooded entrance to the Ceiriog Valley



Chirk Estate to Froncysyllte summary:

- Hill slopes facing settlement and industrial developed lowlands
- Castle and estate parkland, woodlands and farmland
- Gateway to Ceiriog Valley and Vale of Llangollen
- Traversed by Offa's Dyke
- Focus for tourism

Map of Chirk Estate to Froncysyllte Landscape Character Area



Character Area boundaries should be considered transitional rather than precise
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Key characteristics

Visual character:

- Dominated by the designed landscape of the Chirk estate with castle, parkland, associated farmland and encircling belts of mixed woodland
- Smaller scale woodland and pasture mosaic is found on the steeper slopes above Froncysyllte
- Lower edges of area are generally affected by views of industry in Chirk and Cefn Mawr
- Good views from higher areas,

350 m above sea level, with higher areas underlain by older sedimentary rocks of Silurian age, part of the Berwyn Dome and lower slopes by sedimentary rocks of Carboniferous age, overlain by glacial deposits

- Chirk Castle is built on an outcrop of Carboniferous sandstone and limestone. Limestone also outcrops above Froncysyllte where it has been quarried
- Soils of the Chirk estate are generally loamy and well-drained, with more acid or seasonally wet soils at higher elevations

Ecological character:

- Chirk wood-pasture and parkland and veteran trees are a national



biodiversity priority habitat supporting a range of saproxylic (dead wood) invertebrates

- The area contains valuable broadleaved woodland and mixed woodland, as well as conifer plantations. There are individual veteran trees within the Chirk woodlands of particularly high value and small semi-natural ancient woodlands are found near Froncysyllte
- Some small vulnerable grassland habitats on moorland margins

Historical and cultural character:

- The present landscape has evolved through its strategic location on the upland/lowland and English/Welsh border
- Chirk Castle is a major focal point for tourism, of national importance, as is Offa's Dyke footpath which passes through the grounds
- Offa's Dyke is a medieval military feature on a former political boundary which crosses Wrexham north-south.
- Chirk Castle is a 13th century castle adapted as a gentry dwelling, and now partly under National Trust management, as are the gardens. It has many historical and cultural associations
- Much of the surrounding farmland was once owned by the Chirk estate, and some is still in estate ownership

Landscape sensitivity

Because of its prominent and strategic location, the area is sensitive to change. It is also strongly affected by development in adjacent landscape character areas, particularly Chirk to which it is historically and visually linked

Overall management strategy:

Conservation

Management Guidance

Aims	Guidelines
Conserve historic landscape	● Maintain present management of parkland, woodland and farmland ● Protect the setting of Offa's Dyke
Reduce impact of nearby industry	● Carry out strategic planting to filter views
Preserve geological features	● Maintain the integrity of existing landforms ● Maintain the integrity and continuity of geological exposures, and assess new ones ● Promote awareness of the geological heritage of the area
Conserve and perpetuate habitats	● Retain old and veteran trees and plant new generations of veteran trees, ● Replace coniferous trees with native species ● Avoid chemical use in parkland and wood pasture
Preserve archaeology	● Protect archaeological sites, maintain historic field pattern ● Maintain Offa's Dyke monument through adoption of management plan drawn up by Offa's Dyke Officer at Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust ● Maintain existing field systems and carry out further surveys
Strengthen links between Chirk estate and local areas	● Continue present management regime of Chirk Castle between Chirk estate and estate ● Further enhance area for walkers and visitors and improve access from Chirk village and other areas through better walking routes, and low key public transport initiatives ● Consider selective tree clearance to improve views of castle from Ceiriog Valley and vice versa
Support sustainable land uses	● Promote sustainable land management through agri environment schemes ● Encourage sustainable tourism and cultural initiatives



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All our information is available in accessible formats





Chirk 7a

This is one of a series of Local Planning Guidance Notes based on Wrexham LANDMAP (adopted November 2004), setting out recommendations for each Landscape Character area.



Chirk summary

- Industrial Structures within a wider rural setting visually dominating much of the area and beyond
- Canal (a major tourist attraction) road and rail corridors pass through the area
- Chirk is within a shallow valley with open views to hills.
- Contains nationally important viaduct and aqueduct historical landscape features
- Village lies between the historic estates of Chirk Castle and Brynkinallt

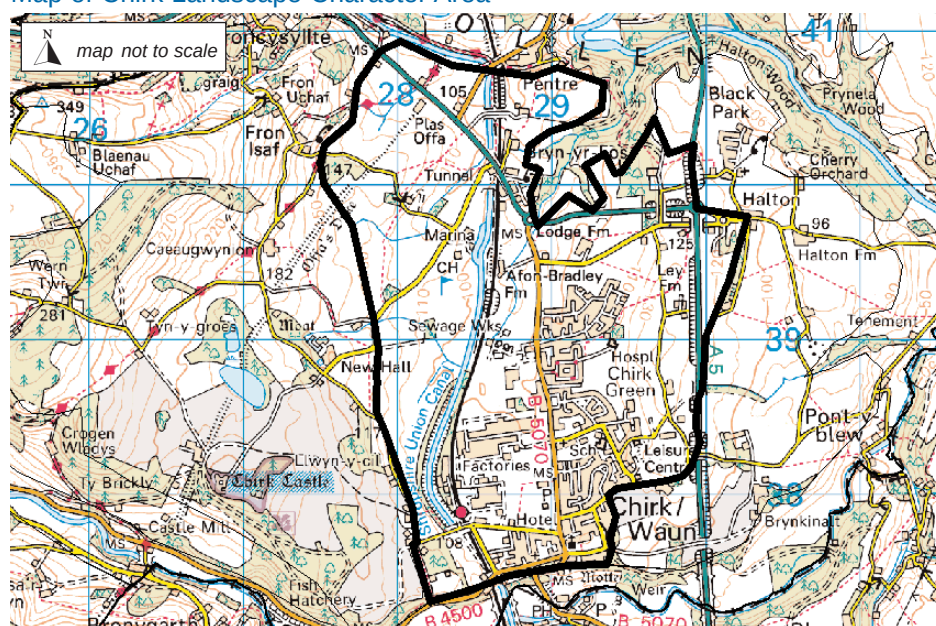


An area on the Welsh-English border, and on historic transport routes, with strongly contrasting rural, suburban and industrial elements.

Landscape context

Chirk is the southernmost and smallest of four character areas in Wrexham which border the uplands and have a mixed rural and urban landscape. The other areas are Cefn Mawr, Rhosllanerchrugog-Rhostyllen, and West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys.

Map of Chirk Landscape Character Area



Character Area boundaries should be considered transitional rather than precise
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Key characteristics

Visual character:

- Area enclosed by hills to west and ridge to east but with generally open views
- Chirk village and valley are in places influenced by industrial land use, structures, steam phume and occasionally by background noise and odours
- Countryside with large regular fields in mainly pastoral use, with hedgerows and sparse hedgerow trees
- Visually diverse with mixture of historic and modern land uses.
- Communications corridor, with road, rail and canal running north-south along edge of uplands

- To the east of Chirk a ridge cuts Chirk off the rest of lowland Wrexham

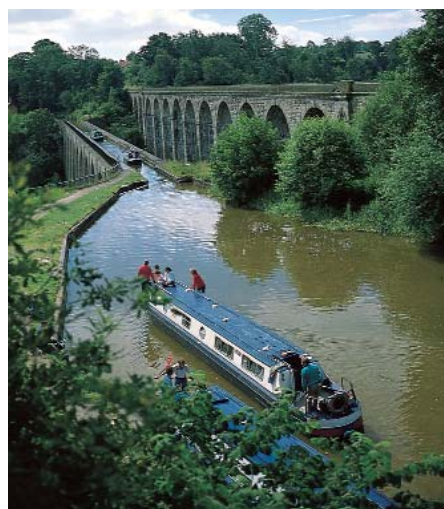
Geological character:

- The minor ridge to the east of Chirk is formed from Coal Measures. Restored coal tips can be found at Chirk Green and Halton
- Much of the area is covered by glacial till (clays) from which the clayey loam soils of the area are derived

Ecological character:

- Farmland and golf course are mainly improved grassland of low biodiversity value
- The Shropshire Union Canal is an aquatic habitat of high value

- Small but valuable areas of broadleaved and coniferous woodland are found in the area



Historical and cultural character:

- The Shropshire Union Canal corridor, in cutting, has its own tranquil character. It includes a visually and historically outstanding aqueduct over the River Ceiriog, close to the Chester-Shrewsbury railway viaduct, and is a visitor attraction, with a small marina next to Chirk Golf course
- Chirk (English form of Welsh 'Ceiriog') is a medieval non-planned settlement with an earth motte and early church. It developed on the old A5 at the Welsh-English border
- Whitehurst is an important, but neglected, 17th century walled garden which was once part of the Chirk estate
- The former Brynkinallt Colliery is now restored to community woodland and open space, and new business uses are developing on restored colliery land at Halton

Landscape sensitivity

High sensitivity because of the close proximity of tourist attractions and scenic areas. Whilst already urbanised, Chirk is vulnerable to further development which could affect the historical and rural landscape character of the surroundings.

Overall management strategy:

Enhancement, restoration and conservation

Management Guidance

Aims	Guidelines
Conserve undeveloped rural hillside character	● Resist siting of masts and other built development on skylines and open slopes ● Ensure new development is integrated into existing village
Mitigate impact of industry	● Increase urban and rural tree planting generally ● Reduce visual impact of business development in prominent rural setting at Halton through low rise building and colours which blend with countryside
Conserve and restore historic designed landscape	● Preserve walls, landform and features of Whitehurst 17th century gardens and Brynkinallt estate ● Encourage restoration and beneficial uses for Whitehurst Gardens and Brynkinallt walled gardens
Preserve geological features and assess new exposures	● Ensure new development or management practices do not damage natural features or geological exposures ● Assess any exposures for scientific or educational interest and protect if of value
Enhance and extend existing habitats for wildlife	● Follow recommendations of Wrexham Biodiversity Action Plan ● Manage canal banks for water vole, protect bats in buildings, walls and old trees ● Promote agri-environment schemes, restore hay meadow management ● Retain, enhance and extend woodlands ● Protect existing wildlife corridors, including aquatic corridors and hedgerows, and develop new ones - refer also to the Green Network Strategy
Preserve archaeological development	● Evaluate archaeology in advance of development within the medieval core area of Chirk, protect motte from loss of features ● Continue existing British Waterways management strategy for canal, conserve A5 (Telford's road) ● Carry out further assessment of fieldscapes and develop a management strategy
Encourage local/sustainable tourist and business initiatives	● Maintain historic appearance of rural areas and promote awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the historic dimension of landscape character ● The area is particularly sensitive to residential conversions of farm buildings, which lose the original character of the building ● Refer to Green Network Strategy due March 2007 and implement new links



For further information contact:

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Appendix 3: Effects on Landscape Character

LCA5a Chirk Estate to Froncysyllte					
Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High		Lower	↔	Higher	Value: High
Scale	Medium to large scale landscape of pasture fields and parkland on an east-facing landform. Views outwards across lower-lying land to the east are available.		■		• AONB; • Chirk Castle (designated heritage assets and visitor attraction); • Offa's Dyke Path National Trail; • Local landscape designation (SLA).
Pattern/ Complexity	A mix of enclosed agriculture, plantations and historic parkland, on a landform that slopes consistently from west to east. The pattern is consistent, organic and relatively simple.			■	
Development/ Human Influence	Traditional (and often designated) built features predominate within the LCA. The presence of industrial features at the Kronospan site is an established discordant presence in outward views.			■	
Connections with adjacent areas	Obvious and very strong visual relationship with LCA 7a to the east. Very obvious transition into the valleys of the Ceiriog (to the south) and the Dee (to the north). Plantation woodland marks the transition into the higher ground to the west.			■	
Visual Interruption	Typically open views are available eastwards, due to the underlying landform. However, there is significant screening vegetation also present, especially with the Chirk Castle Estate		■		
Sensitivity: High The LCA is a mixture of pastoral agriculture, plantation woodland and historic parkland. The east-facing landform focuses views outwards over Chirk and including the Kronospan site, which is an established if discordant presence. Susceptibility to change is medium to high, with the predominantly traditional built environment, strong linkages with the land to the east, and the simple consistent landscape pattern the most susceptible components of character. The value of the landscape is high. The LCA is located within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and also lies within a local landscape designation. As such, the value of the landscape itself is clearly recognised. Additionally, wider value is represented by the presence of Chirk Castle (and estate) both as a designated heritage asset and as an important visitor destination, and by the presence of the Offa's Dyke Path, a nationally imported promoted walking route. Overall, sensitivity is high.					
Size/ Scale of Effect: • The Proposed Development would be a very minor addition to the existing larger assemblage of industrial structures/ buildings at the Kronospan site; • The Proposed Development would be well screened by existing structures, vegetation cover and/or landform, and is unlikely to be visible from within the LCA; • The existing influence of the Kronospan site upon the landscape character of the LCA would not change as a result of the proposed extension.		Geographical Extent: • N/a.			

Duration: N/a	Reversibility: N/a
Magnitude: No Change The Proposed Development would be introduced into the existing Kronospan site where a range of large-scale industrial structures are already present (including structures that are far taller/ larger than what is proposed). It would comprise a minor extension of a large existing building. The arrangement of existing structures relative to the proposal, together with the surrounding landform and vegetation cover would screen views and the Proposed Development is unlikely to be visible from within LCA 5a. In this context, the additional presence of the Proposed Development would be wholly unremarkable and have no influence upon the character of the LCA.	
Significant Effect: No Effect As no change in character would occur, there would be no effect.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: N/a.	

LCA7a Chirk					
Susceptibility to Change: Medium		Lower	↔	Higher	Value: High
Scale	Generally a small-medium scale landscape, but with the Kronospan site notably out of scale with other features present. Views are typically short-range due to enclosure by buildings and vegetation.		■		• AONB overlaps the western boundary of the LCA; • Local landscape designation (SLA) present west of the canal; • World Heritage Site (canal); • Canal has recreational function (including marina and towpath); • Heritage assets within Chirk (listed buildings and Conservation Area); • Chirk is an established settlement with village centre and residential areas.
Pattern/ Complexity	A varied pattern of small scale residential and commercial buildings, enclosed agricultural fields, transport corridors and large scale industry. As such, the landscape is not consistent and has both organic and geometric influences.	■			
Development/ Human Influence	Typically small-scale buildings, both traditional and contemporary, but with the Kronospan Site a very prominent large-scale industrial facility, including tall/ bulky structures		■		
Connections with adjacent areas	Visual relationship with the hillsides to the west (LCA 5a). The canal provides a functional relationship with the landscapes to the north and south (along the canal corridor). Very obvious transition into the valleys of the Ceiriog (to the south) and the Dee (to the north). The A5 corridor marks a clear boundary to the east.			■	
Visual Interruption	Views are frequently interrupted by buildings (within the village) and by vegetation elsewhere. Nevertheless there are localised spots of longer range visibility, with the Kronospan site typically clearly visible.	■			
Sensitivity: Medium to High The LCA contains a relatively diverse mix of features, of which the Kronospan site is prominent by virtue of its large size/ scale. Susceptibility to change is medium, with the linkages with the adjacent land to the west the most susceptible component of character. Value is high. The LCA lies partially within the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and also lies within a local landscape designation, thereby recognising the inherent vale of the landscape. The presence of the World Heritage Site adds further vale, both as a recognised heritage asset that is in important landscape feature in its own right, and also as an important tourist/ recreational resource. Chirk itself provides the setting for the lives of its residents and has clear value in that regard. Overall, sensitivity is medium to high					
Size/ Scale of Effect: • The Proposed Development would be a very minor addition to the existing far larger assemblage of industrial structures/ buildings at the Kronospan site; • The Proposed Development would be well screened by existing structures, vegetation cover and/or landform (in particular by tree cover along Holyhead Road, by tree cover along the internal site access road, and by the existing main warehouse building itself), and would have no influence upon the wider landscape/ townscape;		Geographical Extent: • N/a.			

The existing influence of the Kronospan site upon the landscape character of the LCA would not change as a result of the proposed extension.	
Duration: N/a	Reversibility: N/a
Magnitude: No Change The Proposed Development would be introduced into the existing Kronospan site where a range of large-scale industrial structures are already present (including structures that are far taller/ larger than what is proposed). The arrangement of existing structures relative to the proposal, together with the surrounding landform and vegetation cover (in particular the bund and tree cover along Holyhead Road) would screen views from the majority of the surrounding area. Limited visibility along the site entrance would be in the context of existing buildings and tree cover located between the Proposed Development and Holyhead Road. In this context, the additional presence of the Proposed Development would have no influence upon the character of the LCA.	
Significant Effect: No Effect As no change in character would occur, there would be no effect.	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: N/a.	

Appendix 4: Effects on Viewpoints.

Viewpoint A: Chirk Recreation Ground Grid Ref: 329022, 337810	
View north-west across recreation ground in town centre. Attractive, traditional style houses and commercial buildings to the rear. Existing development at the Kronospan site is conspicuous, set against the backdrop of the hills beyond, with emissions plumes also visible. Tree cover along the northern edge of the recreation ground offers some limited filtering of views.	
Susceptibility to Change: Medium • Open space users (and also nearby residents and passing motorists); ◦ Likely to be focused on their activities; ◦ Kronospan site is a prominent presence and which detracts from the views available.	Value: High • No landscape designations; • Within Conservation Area; • Part of the townscape of central Chirk; • Public open space.
Sensitivity: Medium Receptors at the viewpoint would be users of the public open space, who would be likely to be focused on their activities, and who would be well aware of the existing presence of the Kronospan site (i.e. the presence of the industrial structures, whilst clearly detracting from the view, would not have dissuaded users from their visit). Similar views are available to passing motorists and to residents at nearby properties, who would also be well aware of the presence of Kronospan. Value is high. The viewpoint is located within a Conservation Area and is an important part of the townscape of central Chirk. Additionally, the public open space has an important recreation and amenity function. Overall, sensitivity is medium.	
Size/ Scale of Effect: • Scale of Change in view: ◦ The Proposed Development would be screened from view by vegetation cover to the north and would not be visible. • Degree of contrast/integration: N/a • Nature of the View: Static view from within recreation ground, which can be experienced at the leisure of the viewer	Geographical Extent: • Angle: N/a • Distance to Proposed Development: c.520m • Extent of area over which changes would be visible: N/a
Duration: N/a	Reversibility: N/a
Magnitude: No Change The Proposed Development would be screened from view by existing vegetation north of the recreation ground. The existing main warehouse cannot be seen from the Viewpoint, and the proposed covered loading yard would similarly not be visible.	
Significant Effect: No Effect As there would be no change in view, there would be no resulting visual effect	
Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial: N/a	

Viewpoint S: B5070, opposite Kronospan site entrance Grid Ref: 329024, 338309	
View looking west into the Kronospan site from the B5070. The Viewpoint is opposite the site entrance, and views from the road to the north and south are wholly or largely screened by dense vegetation cover. The eastern end of the existing main warehouse is clearly visible to the north-west through a gap in tree cover. The existing office building can be seen filtered through tree cover. The remainder of the existing main warehouse is also visible, but is heavily filtered by tree cover. Other buildings and structures at the site cannot be seen. A church and a care home are located to the rear (east) of the viewpoint, with a clipped hedgerow and some mature cover between these buildings and the B5070 itself.	
Susceptibility to Change: Medium to High - Residents - Oblique views from the care home - Road users - Typically have a medium susceptibility;	Value: Medium - No landscape designations; - Not a location promoted, or likely to be visited for its scenic quality; - People tend to value views from their properties.
Sensitivity: Medium to High The viewpoint reflects oblique views from the properties in the adjacent care home. An oblique view is less susceptible to change than a direct one, as the change in question can be more easily avoided by the viewer. As such, susceptibility to change is medium to high. The same view is also available to road users, who are less susceptible to change Value is medium. Whilst the viewpoint is not subject to any landscape designations, or a location likely to be visited for any visual qualities, people do tend to value the views available from their properties. Overall, sensitivity is medium to high	
Size/ Scale of Effect: Scale of Change in view: - The Proposed Development would be very well screened by the existing tree cover along Holyhead Road and within the Kronospan site; - Parts of the extension would be glimpsed through the trees in winter; - In summer, screening from foliage would increase, and visibility would reduce; - Limited and incremental change in view, with the Proposed Development a minor background feature. Degree of contrast/integration: Existing main warehouse is already visible Nature of the View: A short-range view, largely curtailed by dense vegetation at the Kronospan boundary	Geographical Extent: Angle: Direct from properties and from the bus stop. Perpendicular to the direction of road travel Distance to Proposed Development: c.120m Extent of area over which changes would be visible: c.25m around the Viewpoint (i.e. from where views along the site entrance are available)
Duration: Long-term (permanent development)	Reversibility: Irreversible (permanent development)
Magnitude: Small The proposed development would be very well screened by the existing tree cover along the western side of Holyhead Road and within the Kronospan site. Parts of the proposed	

covered loading yard would be glimpsed through the trees in winter but would not stand out given the intervening tree cover. In summer, when deciduous foliage is present, this would reduce visibility. The Proposed Development would be a limited addition to the background of the view, with little change in view occurring.

Significant Effect: No

A minor level of effect would occur at worst. The Proposed Development would be very well screened by existing tree cover, with only glimpsed views available, in a context where the eastern end of the main warehouse building can be clearly seen. The fundamental nature of the existing view, looking across a busy road to the site entrance defined by the presence of mature tree cover would not change, albeit limited additional visibility of built forms in the background would be added. Effects would not be significant.

Adverse/ Neutral/ Beneficial:

The effects of the Proposed Development would be adverse.