

---

# **PLAS COCH ACADEMIC CAMPUS REDEVELOPMENT**

---

## **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

**June 2018**



Well House Barns  
Chester Road  
Bretton  
Chester  
CH4 0DH

---

## CONTENTS

|   |                                       |   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Introduction.....                     | 1 |
| 2 | Methodology .....                     | 3 |
| 3 | Baseline.....                         | 4 |
| 4 | Assessment of Effects .....           | 5 |
| 5 | Mitigation .....                      | 9 |
| 6 | Residual Effects and Conclusions..... | 9 |

## Appendices

Appendix 1 LVIA Methodology

Appendix 2 Extract from *Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance*

## Figures

Figure 1 Landscape and Visual Context

Figure 2 Photographs

---

## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), with more than ten years' post-qualification experience the landscape and visual assessment of development projects. The LVIA was directed and overseen by a second CMLI with over twenty years' similar experience.
- 1.2 The LVIA follows good practice guidance set out in *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (the GLVIA)<sup>1</sup> and adopts an approach proportionate to the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development, whilst not seeking to provide unnecessary detail. The conclusions of the LVIA have been determined through application of professional judgement, supported by reasoned justification.
- 1.3 Landscape and visual effects are separate, although closely related and interlinked issues. 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. 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.
- 1.4 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 Appraisal is not static.

### ***Description of the Proposed Development***

- 1.5 The Proposed Development is described in the Planning Statement. The principal elements are summarised below:
- New single-storey extensions to main campus building (Learning Gateway and Inner Learning Gateway);
  - Demolition of existing single-storey engineering building;
  - New two-storey engineering building; and
  - Demolition of existing Student Union building and other small ancillary buildings;

---

<sup>1</sup> Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition 2013. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*. Routledge: Abingdon.

- 
- Extension to sports hall building;
  - Removal of existing sports pitches, and relocation off-site;
  - New car parking areas; and
  - Associated public realm landscape treatments.

### ***Legislative and Policy Context***

- 1.6 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.

#### *European Landscape Convention*

- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 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*

- 1.9 Full details of relevant planning policies are set out in the Planning Statement. Relevant documents include:
- *Planning Policy Wales*, edition 9 published in November 2016; and
  - *Wrexham Unitary Development Plan* (adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council 2005);
  - *Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance* (published by Wrexham Borough Council 2007);
  - *Local Planning Guidance Note 7. Landscape and Development* (adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council 2003);
  - *Local Planning Guidance Note 19. Wrexham's Town Character Areas* (adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council 2001);
  - *Local Planning Guidance Note 30. Design* (adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council 2009).

---

## **2.0 Methodology**

### ***Current Guidance***

- 2.1 As noted in Section 1, this LVIA has been based on the published good practice guidelines set out in the GLVIA, and is proportionate to the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development.

### ***The Study Area***

- 2.2 The Study Area for the LVIA has been determined following a site visit to ascertain the surrounding context into which the Proposed Development would be introduced. This confirmed that due to the nature of the Site and its surroundings, and the type of changes proposed, that the influence of the Proposed Development would be very localised, and as such the study area covers the Site and its immediate vicinity only.

### ***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. However, it is considered likely to be of assistance to the decision-maker if such a statement is included 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 appraised 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. The judgement made will depend on the specific circumstances being considered.

### ***Consultation***

- 2.5 Refer to the Planning Statement for details of consultations undertaken.

---

### ***Limitations***

- 2.6 The field visit to inform the LVIA was carried out in May 2018, when deciduous vegetation was in leaf. Where relevant to its conclusions, the LVIA has regard to likely seasonal change in visibility.

## **3.0 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 Site is located within Glyndwr University's wider Plas Coch Campus. This is located off the A541 Mold Road, close to the western edge of Wrexham. The location of the Site is indicated on Figure 1, and photographs looking towards the Site from nearby locations are illustrated on Figure 2.
- 3.3 The campus is bordered by two-storey housing to the south (on the opposite side of Mold Road), by the Racecourse Ground (Wrexham Football Club) to the south-east, by a railway line to the east, and by further two-storey housing off Crispin Lane to the north-east. A footpath runs along the northern boundary, at a lower elevation to the campus and separated from it by a stone wall topped with a steel security fence. A tennis centre is located north of the footpath. To the west, there is commercial/retail development. The campus comprises a variety of different buildings exhibiting a range of architectural styles. The western and southern frontages include mature trees set within a generous landscape strip.
- 3.4 The tallest buildings in the vicinity of the campus are two seven-storey student accommodation buildings, located close to the eastern boundary off Crispin Lane, immediately north of the Racecourse Ground. Other buildings tend to be no taller than three storeys, although some structures do extend above the general roofline (e.g. prominent chimneys).

---

### *Landscape Designations*

- 3.5 The Site is not covered by any landscape designations at either a national or local level.

### *Landscape Character Assessment and Related Studies*

- 3.6 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).
- 3.7 The Proposed Development would be located within the Urban landscape type and within LCA 10: Wrexham Town. LCA 10 is further divided into sub-character areas (SCA), based on work undertaken in 2001 (which is also available as a separated SPG document referenced in Section 1 above). The Proposed Development would be located in SCA 5: Mixed Non-Residential. An extract from the SPG relating to LCA 10 and SCA5 is included as Appendix 1 to the LVIA.

### *Future Landscape Change*

- 3.8 In the absence of the Proposed Development, it is assumed that the site would continue in its current use.

## **4.0 Assessment of Effects**

### ***Construction***

- 4.1 Refer to the Planning Statement for a description of the construction stage of the Proposed Development.
- 4.2 Construction (including demolition) would, by necessity, require the use of specialist vehicles and other plant, some of which would be readily apparent by virtue of their colour, size or movement. In addition to the presence of these abnormal items, the very presence of construction activity on site, would change the appearance of parts of the Site, whilst this activity is ongoing.
- 4.3 Due to the nature of the Proposed Development, construction is likely to be broken down into a series of separate phases, all occurring at different points in the overall six-and-a-half year construction period, which would largely take place independently of

---

one another, and which would have distinctly separate and localised influences of short duration upon their surroundings. Given this, and the temporary nature of construction activity, construction effects would not be significant.

### ***Landscape Effects: Operational***

#### *Effects on Landscape Fabric*

- 4.4 The Site comprises a mix of buildings, external hard spaces and vegetation. The Proposed Development would result in limited change to this, replacing some existing elements, with other similar elements. There would be some localised loss of vegetation (chiefly amenity grassland and ornamental planting) to accommodate the proposed changes (for example where the new engineering building is proposed), but new hard and soft landscaping would be provided post-construction, with considerable tree planting proposed around new car parking and the engineering building, and a likely overall increase in tree cover within the Site. It is clear that effects on landscape fabric would not be significant, and as such, further detailed assessment is not deemed necessary.

#### *Effects on Landscape Character*

- 4.5 The changes associated with the Proposed Development would occur within the existing Plas Coch campus. The changes would comprise relatively minor changes to the assemblage of features within the campus and would not affect the overall balance of such features, nor increase the influence of the campus upon the surrounding area. In terms of character, the contribution of the campus to the landscape/ townscape of the Study Area would remain as at baseline. As such, it is clear that there would be no appreciable effect upon character, and as such, further detailed assessment is not deemed necessary.

### ***Visual Effects: Operational***

- 4.6 The Proposed Development would result in changes to the existing assemblage of features within the Plas Coch campus. Several small single-storey buildings would be demolished. Two small single-storey extensions would be added to the main campus building. The single-storey engineering building would be demolished and replaced by a new two-storey building. An existing sports pitch would be replaced with car parking, and other small areas of car parking would also be introduced. New hard and soft landscaping would be provided.

- 
- 4.7 Many of the changes resulting from the Proposed Development would be wholly or largely visually contained within the campus, and as such would only be apparent to students and employees, and not from publicly accessible areas or from residences.
- 4.8 Exceptions to this are: the new Learning Gateway, which would be visible from the A541 Mold Road and properties on the southern side of the road; and new car parking areas along the eastern perimeter of the campus, which would be visible from Crispin Lane, from the tall student accommodation blocks at the south-eastern edge of the campus, and from properties on Crispin Lane, West Street and Ashfield Road to the north-east. The tallest element of the proposed changes would be the new engineering building, but this would be largely screened from publicly accessible areas by surrounding buildings to the south and west.
- 4.9 In the case of residents within the student accommodation the fact the individual students are likely to be present for a short period only (nine-ten months) suggests a limited susceptibility to change and also limits the value likely to be placed on the view. Susceptibility to change is medium, as is value. Overall, sensitivity is medium.
- 4.10 In views looking north from the student accommodation, and especially from the upper storeys, the replacement of the adjacent sports field with new car parking would be apparent. From some individual apartments, further changes would also be visible to the west, such as the demolition of the existing engineering building and student union building, and the introduction of the new engineering building. Such changes would take place in the context of the wider views across the campus (and from upper storeys across the surrounding area). In this context, change in view would be limited, and would be small to medium in magnitude. Minor to moderate effects would result, which would not be significant. The Proposed Development is more likely to improve than detract from the quality of the existing views, and effects are likely to be neutral or beneficial rather than adverse.
- 4.11 Road users, whether in vehicles or on foot, on Crispin Lane, currently experience a range of detracting features including the existing security fencing, vacant plots of land south of the seven-storey student accommodation buildings, the rear of the Racecourse Ground football stadium, existing security fencing along the campus boundary, similar fencing along the boundary to the east with the railway land, together with views of hardstanding within the railway boundary, and lighting columns along the road itself and in surrounding plots. Susceptibility to change is low to

---

medium. There is little specific value to the current views, and value is also low to medium. Overall, sensitivity is low to medium.

- 4.12 The removal of the perimeter fencing, goalposts and floodlights of the current sports facilities and their replacement with new car parking and associated street furniture, including new lighting columns would be evident from Crispin Lane. The new engineering building would be glimpsed in the middle ground of the view. Change in view would be small to medium, with little change in the nature of experience for road users, but rather a simple physical change in the features present on the western side of the road. Minor to moderate effects would be experienced, which would not be significant. The Proposed Development would neither improve nor detract from the quality of the view, and effects would be neutral.
- 4.13 From the A541 Mold Road (low to medium sensitivity as a busy arterial road) and from the properties south of the road (high sensitivity), change would comprise the introduction of the Learning Gateway as a single storey extension at the entrance of the main campus building. This change would be localised in the context of the existing views of the campus, and would be experienced in the context of busy traffic in the foreground. Views would be filtered by established campus tree planting from many properties. Change would be small in magnitude and the resulting effect would be minor and not significant. The Proposed Development would be unlikely to detract from the quality of the view and is more likely to be seen as an enhancement. Effects are likely to be neutral or beneficial.
- 4.14 From the properties to the north-east of the campus on Crispin Lane, West Street and Ashfield Road (all high sensitivity), views into the campus are available from south-facing windows and the rear gardens of some properties. Existing car parking at the Site perimeter is visible, but longer views tend to be restricted by nearby buildings. Two small buildings would be demolished as part of the Proposed Development and replaced by small areas of additional car parking. This would have little bearing upon the nature of the views available south from the properties, which would continue to be as described earlier in this paragraph. Change would be small in magnitude and the resulting effect would be minor and not significant. The Proposed Development would neither improve nor detract from the quality of the view, and effects would be neutral.

---

## **5.0 Mitigation**

- 5.1 As the landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development would not be significant, no mitigation measures are proposed.

## **6.0 Residual Effects and Conclusions**

- 6.1 The Proposed Development would comprise the demolition of several existing buildings, the introduction of new buildings, the removal of a sports pitch and the introduction of new car parking, all within the confines of the more extensive Plas Coch campus. As such, whilst there would be relatively limited change to the assemblage of features within the campus, the campus itself would remain and its influence upon the surrounding area would not change. Landscape and visual effects would not be significant.

---

## APPENDICES

---

## FIGURES