



LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

LAND ON THE EAST SIDE OF BOTTOM ROAD, SUMMERHILL,

GRID COORDINATES: X331006, Y354261

**OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR THE PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT AND
ASSOCIATED ACCESS**

Our Ref: 48048

April 2016

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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1.0 Introduction and Methodology

- 1.1 AAH Planning Consultants has been commissioned to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for an outline planning application for residential development at Land on the East Side of Bottom Road, Summerhill in the settlement of Gwersyllt, Wrexham. The application is submitted in outline with all matters reserved except access. This LVIA assessment is therefore based primarily on the principle of development though regard has been given to the indicative plans provided as part of the application and the landscape and visual effects emanating from the proposed access point. AAH Planning Consultants comprises professionally accredited individuals. Our consultants are members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA).
- 1.2 This LVIA assesses the potential landscape and visual implications of the proposed residential development in isolation and in conjunction with other projects in the vicinity. The LVIA is divided into the following sections:
- Introduction to the Methodology
 - Site Location
 - Landscape Impact Assessment
 - Visual Impact Assessment
 - Proposed Mitigation Measures
 - Conclusion
- 1.3 The format of this assessment is based on the principles described in The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland, published 2002, and The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, published 2013. The assessment is also in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2011. The methodology used within this report is attached as Appendix A.

- 1.4 A desktop study was made of published information to establish the landscape context of the site and identify potential viewpoints which may be affected by the residential development. These viewpoints were considered to illustrate the impact from all directions of the application site. Annotated photos are found in Appendix B of this report and are referenced throughout the assessment.
- 1.5 The application site and surrounding area was visited on the 4th April 2016, where the weather conditions were interchangeable but clear. The assessment took place in early Spring when some of the deciduous trees had still lost their leaves providing the opportunity to present a baseline from which the worst-case scenario could be obtained.

2.0 Site Location

- 2.1 The site in question is located to the north of Summerhill along Bottom Road. The site is located on the east side of Bottom Road. A field also sits on the west side with Top Road running parallel to this field. These roads connect with Windy Hill to the north and the A541 to the north-east. The application site is located with farm steads and houses sporadically positioned along this and Bottom Road, extending beyond the housing at Caer Haf and Summer Hill Park which back on in the direction of the site. The site is generally pasture land bordered by hedgerow and individual maturing trees. The land to the west extends towards a golf course (Moss Valley Golf Club) and to the east to the A541. The site is illustrated in the following aerial Ordnance Survey (OS) map attached in full in Appendix E:

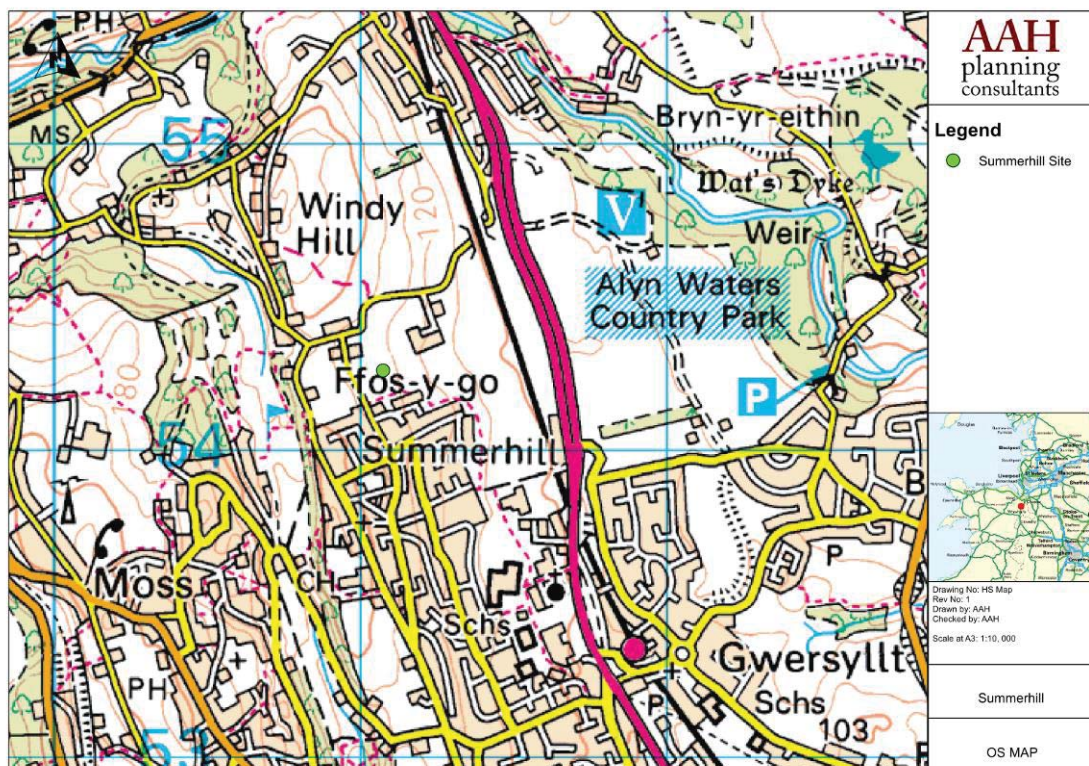


Image 2.1: OS Map of the Application Site in Context

- 2.2 The area comprises low lying land around Wrexham town and its outlying urban villages (such as Gwersyllt), generally rural in nature but often with significant noise from the A483, adjacent roads and the railway. The A641 lies to the east of the application site running in a general north/south alignment. The area is generally low lying open farmland with a large open field pattern with well-defined hedgerow boundaries. The original rural character has been significantly weakened by urban influences with some pockets of interest.

- 2.3 This area is classified by LANDMAP (a GIS based resource where information about the landscape is recorded, organised and evaluated into a nationally consistent spatial data set) as rolling lowland farmland but heavily influenced by the A483 and more locally to the application site Mold Road; other roads and rail corridors subdivide the wider area, with pylons, views of housing & industry, mining & quarrying a frequent occurrence. Although relatively fragmented by development, the area has not suffered as much visual degradation as the adjacent aspect area REF: WRXHMVS038 in LANDMAP. This will be teased out further in the Landscape section of this report.

3.0 Landscape Impact Assessment

Establishing the Landscape Baseline

National Character Area

- 3.1 Wales is divided into 48 regional scale landscape character areas and each has a distinctive sense of place that enables us to recognise it as a single area, e.g. a range of hills or a major urban area. This is described for each area, according to its geological, habitats, historic, cultural and perceptual characteristics. With each area, different parts will have their own local identity as well. Wales has a choice of working scales for considering the landscape baseline depending on the needs of the case and the likely magnitude of effect. In this case, the application site falls within the area 13, referring to Deeside and Wrexham:

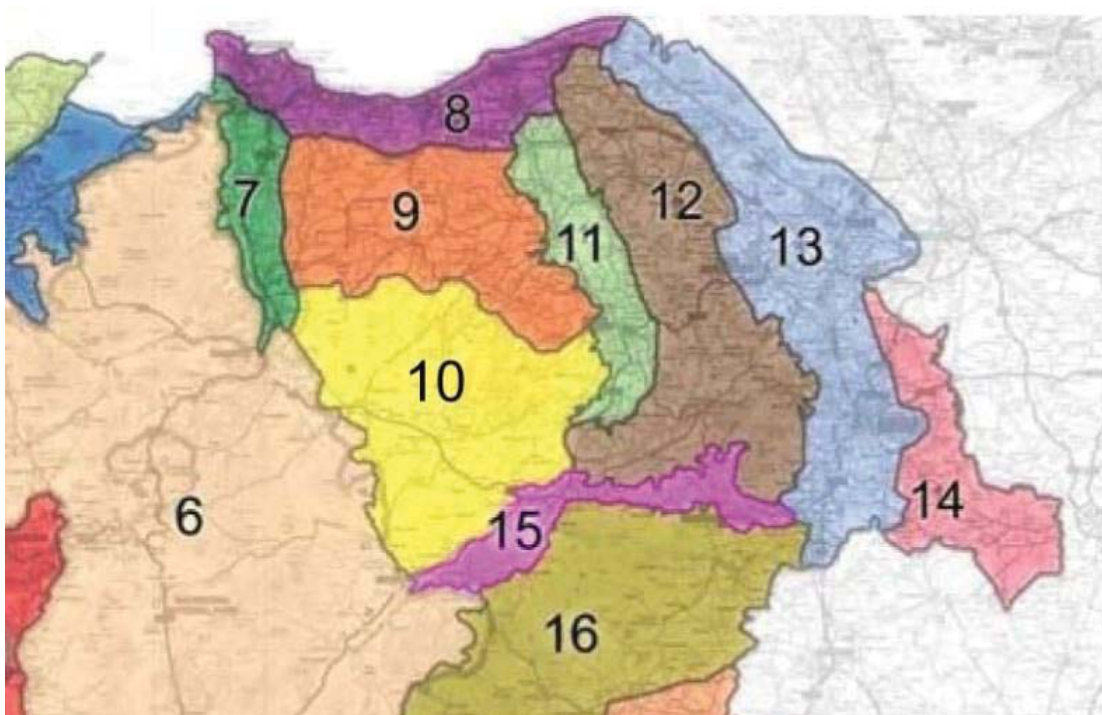


Image 3.1: Map of Welsh Landscape Character Designations

- 3.2 Within each area different parts will have their own identity as well. Local detail is recorded in the LANDMAP Landscape Information System.

LANDMAP Landscape Information System

- 3.3 LANDMAP separates the landscape into five aspects:

- Geological Landscape: this is the study of the geology, geomorphology and hydrology of the area.
- Landscape Habitats: looks at the distribution of vegetation and habitats and the basis for landscape ecology.
- Visual & Sensory: this aspect identifies those landscape qualities that are perceived through the senses. It deals with the individual physical attributes of landform and land cover, as well as their visual patterns of distribution and sensory characteristics, and the relationships between them in a particular area.
- Historic Landscape: focuses on how archaeological and historical sites relate to each other and to the surrounding landscape.
- Cultural Landscape: this considers the relationship that exists between people and places; how people have given meaning to places, how the landscape has shaped their actions and their actions have shaped the landscape.

3.4 Detailed guidance on the LANDMAP methodology is provided in the LANDMAP Information System Manual, published in 2001 and updated in June 2003. The following LANDMAP characterisations apply to the application site:

- Cultural Landscape – Mynydd Rhiwabon Esclusham (lower slopes);
- Geological Landscape – Sydallt;
- Historic Landscape - Windy Hill;
- Landscape Habitats - Talwrn Grassland;
- Visual & Sensory - A483 Mold Road Corridor.

Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance Summary Document

3.5 This Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) is one of a series of guidance notes which support policies of the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP). The UDP seeks the conservation and enhancement of the landscape and its natural and built features of significance and planning applications need to demonstrate how they have achieved this. This guidance forms a material consideration in the determination of all planning

applications which could affect the form, appearance and setting of the built and natural landscape and its features. This document has been prepared using the LANDMAP methodology devised by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) to describe and evaluate the Visual, Geology, Ecology, History, and Cultural aspects of the landscape and provide a basis for a consistent Wales-wide approach to landscape assessment. The Welsh Assembly Government's Planning Policy Wales March 2002 recognises that LANDMAP is an important information resource upon which Local Planning Authorities can draw in making landscape assessments needed to inform local policy, guidance and decision making in this field.

3.6 The SPG provides an introduction and overview to the landscapes of Wrexham and:

- Categorises and groups areas within 4 common broad landscape types (i.e. areas with broadly similar features such as settlement or landform) into Rural/Urban villages, Uplands, Urban, and Rural lowlands;
- Sub-divides the area further into 27 detailed landscape character areas;
- Introduces Key Landscape Issues for each landscape type.

3.7 Within this SPG the application site falls within the Wrexham urban village's broad area which are associated with past coal mining, and located on the edge of the uplands and to the north of Wrexham town. The villages are set among farmland, wooded valleys and regenerating or restored landscapes. This complex character area contains main roads, railways and a canal; as well as Offa's Dyke and prehistoric hill forts, reflecting Wrexham's history on the border between Wales and England, upland and lowland. The site lies within the sub area 'West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys'. The key landscape issues for the Wrexham urban villages include:

- The future of 'urban fringe' landscapes
- The potential for urban forestry
- Impact of new housing on traditional community identity
- Maintenance of local distinctiveness
- The future of Bersham tip

- The need for footpath and cycle links
- The long-term impact of sand and clay quarries and landfill
- Preservation of local history and industrial archaeology

3.8 The following map shows the full extent of the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area:

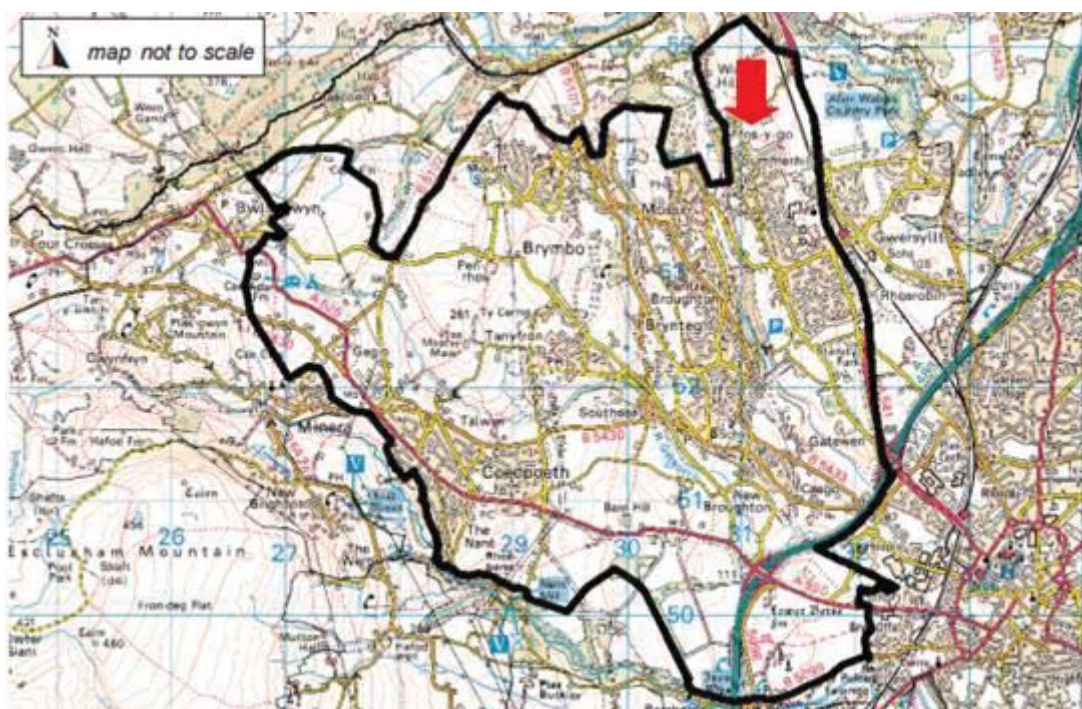


Image 3.2: OS Map Showing the Full Extent of the Sub Area

3.9 This is a complex area of former mining villages, industry, farmland and woodland in a landscape of distinct ridges and valleys which are aligned towards Wrexham town. West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys is the largest and most varied of four character areas in Wrexham which have a mixed rural and urban landscape. The other areas are Chirk, Rhosllannerchrugog - Rhostyllen, and Cefn Mawr. The following represent the key characteristics for the area:

- Mixed rural and urban village character.
- Strong NW-SE orientation, with alternating ridges and valleys.
- Hilltop villages separated by woodland, former industrial land and farmland.
- Widespread use of local Cefn sandstone in older buildings and distinctive stone walls.

- Changing landscape as post mining restoration and regeneration continue.
- Variety of wildlife habitats including small but important wetlands.
- Border area - Offa's Dyke and site of prehistoric hillfort.

3.10 These baseline characteristics within the sub area are assessed in relation to the LANDMAP aspect categories in the following paragraphs.

Landscape Impact Assessment

Geological Landscape

3.11 Within the LANDMAP database the site lies within the Sydallt aspect area which as can be seen in the GIS modelling within Appendix E has a sensitivity value of moderate. The aspect area is shown in the following map (shown in full in Appendix E) illustrating the different sensitivities within the surrounding area:

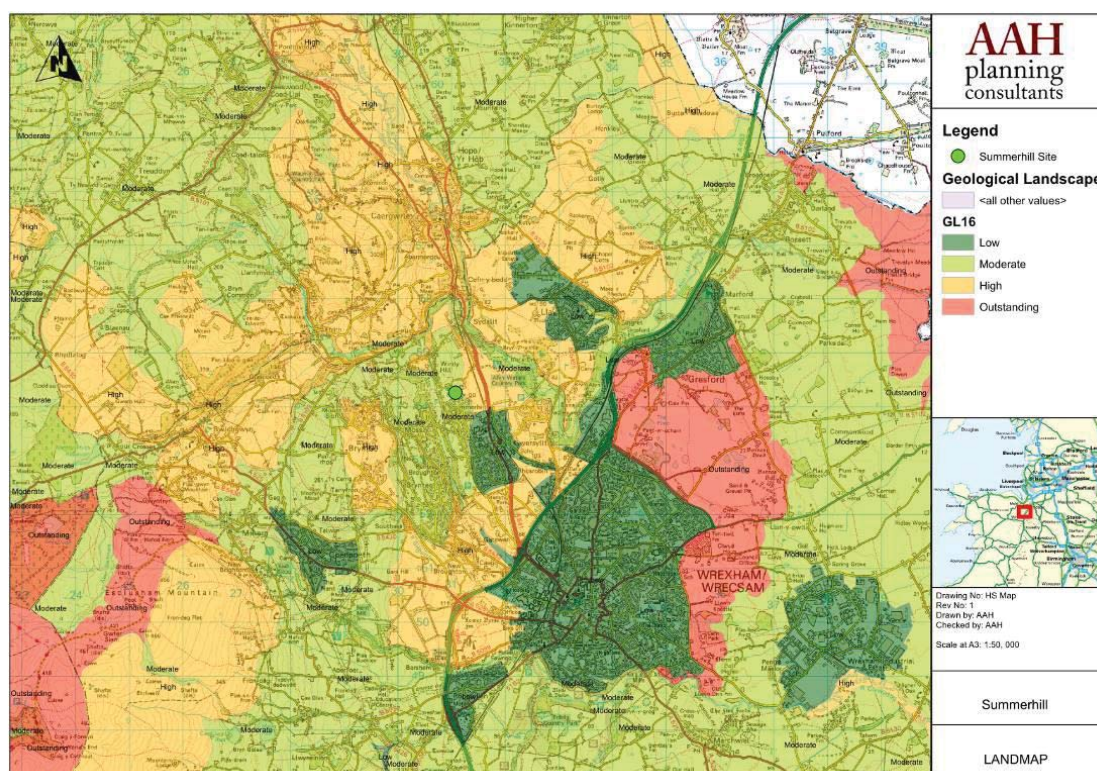


Image 3.3: Geological Aspect Area

3.12 The Sydallt aspect area is a narrow NNW-SSE ridge of "Coal Measures" sandstone (Upper Carboniferous), parallel to that of the Moss area. Developed mainly in the south and rising

to around 170m at Windy Hill in the north (and to the north-west of the application site); it has been given a moderate sensitivity as there were no regionally significant sites/landforms present during the survey. As such the geology/ geomorphology was considered to be typical of feature/ process and is either widespread, better exposed elsewhere or not currently known to be exceptional. More locally within the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area the geological landscape can be characterised as follows:

- The complex landform is related to geological faults, with alternating series of resistant sandstone ridges, and Coal Measure valleys of Carboniferous age.
- Villages are built on outcrops of Cefn Rock (sandstone) which has been quarried for local building stone.
- Glacial till covers much of the lower areas, with glacial sands and gravels towards Wrexham.
- Many artificial landforms including the former Brymbo steelworks site.

3.13 The proposals would result in a direct impact on the underlying geology of the application site but not on the wider area beyond this, either in terms of the broad Sydalit aspect area or the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area. The impact would be limited to the access roads and physical built form associated with the subsequent dwellings and associated infrastructure. The full extent could be quantified at a future approval of reserved matters application; however, this is likely to involve some minor changes to the landform. Overall, this would result in no permanent loss or alteration to the geological or geomorphological features of the landscape characteristics of the baseline, with only a very minor alteration proposed within the context of the broad Sydalit aspect area or the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area. The magnitude of impact and the significance of the effect of the proposed residential development proposal on the geological landscape are therefore negligible.

Landscape Habitats

3.14 Within the LANDMAP database the site lies within the Talwrn Grassland aspect area, which as can be seen in the GIS modelling within Appendix E has a sensitivity value of high. The aspect area is shown in the following map (shown in full in Appendix E) illustrating the different sensitivities within the surrounding area:

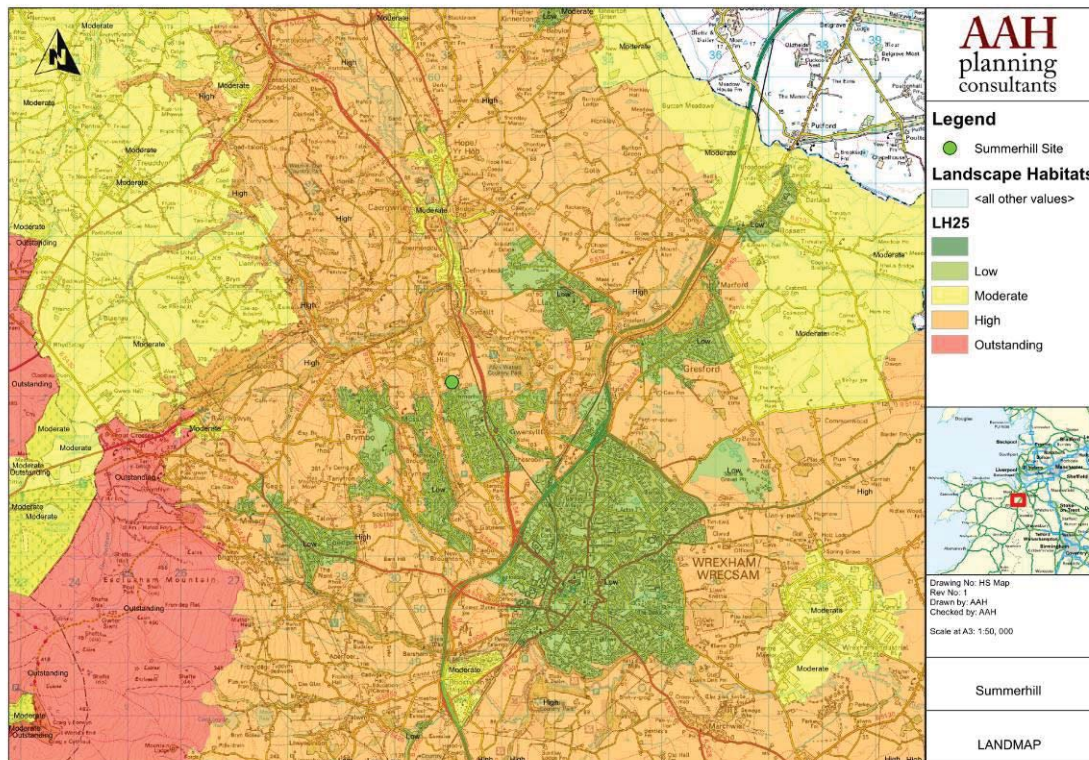


Image 3.4: Landscape Habitat Aspect Area

- 3.15 The Talwrn Grassland aspect area is a very large area of mixed agriculture, mainly grassland but with some arable cropping. Fields are small to medium sized with hedges, and scattered trees, with some small woodlands. The boundary to the east is marked by a change in slope and the A483 road which forms a hard barrier generally on this break of slope and marks a change in field pattern. To the west the boundary is formed with the upland of Eglwyseg and Ruabon Mountain. To the north, the upland grassland of WRXHMLH036 (Four Crosses Upland Grassland) forms the boundary. The southern boundary follows the edge of the county boundary.
- 3.16 The area borders on Ruabon Mountain Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to the west, and contains a number of SSSI's itself, and a Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) (Stryt Las A'r Hafod); as well as a number of local wildlife sites, including woodland, wetlands, rivers and water bodies. This area is most noted for its population of great crested newt, which is why the SAC has been designated. The newts use the ponds and waste ground surrounding Johnston, as do other commoner amphibian insect and bird species. The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) records and the previous survey record a very large number of different bat species using this area. Within the streams; otter, water vole, and several bird species such as linnet are recorded in the area.

- 3.17 The Talwrn Grassland aspect area has been given a high sensitivity as it is a mosaic of pasture, woodland and water which as outlined in the previous paragraph contains a variety of habitats, and many interesting species including the largest known breeding population of great crested newts at Stryt Las A''r Hafod. It also provides a buffer to the Ruabon Mountain SSSI.
- 3.17 More locally within the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area the ecological landscape habitats which define the landscape can be characterised as follows:
- Much of the non-built area is improved grassland or arable of relatively low value;
 - Important wetlands include reed mace swamp at Gatewen Moss and rich swamp and marshy grassland at Higher Berse Marsh. Gwenfro valley has wet woodland and areas of valuable lowland pasture;
 - Plas Power tip and the former Brymbo Steelworks site are being restored mainly to broadleaved woodland.
- 3.18 The application site is characterised by the improved grassland bordered by hedgerows which will have some local ecological value. The application would result in a major alteration to these key elements of the baseline associated with the application site itself; however, in the context of the wider Talwrn Grassland aspect area or indeed the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area the impact would be substantially less pronounced. There would be no direct or indirect on the key characteristics of the baseline that contribute to the high sensitivity of the landscape habitats for example the important wetlands would be avoided with no direct or indirect effects occurring. Any impact is limited to the micro-scale where the proposals would result in a major alteration; however, it should also be noted that there would be the opportunity for some mitigation (discussed in Chapter 5) of this report. In terms of the wider Talwrn Grassland aspect area or indeed the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area, the magnitude of effect would be low with the scheme resulting in a minor alteration to one or more key elements (improved grassland and hedgerows) of the baseline. This scheme would still see an introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape; however, due to the application site's location bordering the housing to the south and being seen as an extension to the settlement. A moderate significance of effect would subsequently ensue.

Visual & Sensory

- 3.19 Within the LANDMAP database the site lies within the A483 Mold Road Corridor aspect area which as can be seen in the GIS modelling within Appendix E, has a sensitivity value of moderate. The aspect area is shown in the following map (shown in full in Appendix E) illustrating the different sensitivities within the surrounding area:

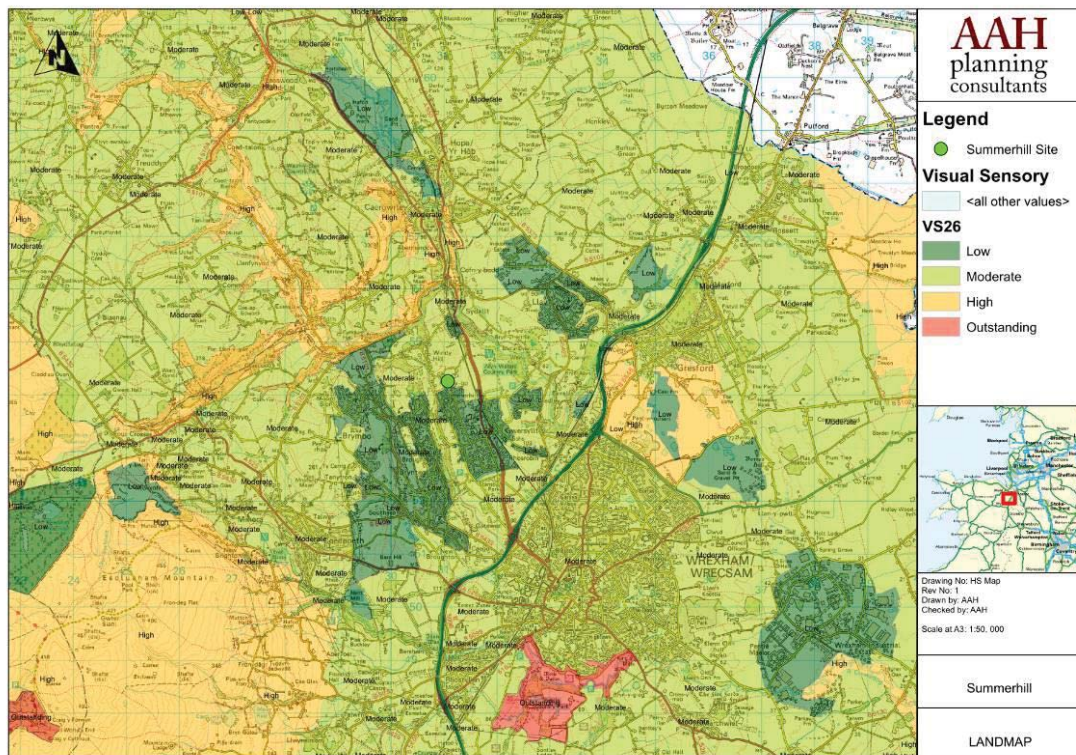


Image 3.5: Visual & Sensory Aspect Area

- 3.20 The A483 Mold Road Corridor aspect area comprises the hinterland low lying land around Wrexham town and its outlying urban villages, generally rural in nature but often with significant noise from A483, adjacent roads and the railway. The area is generally low lying open farmland with a large open field pattern with well-defined hedgerow boundaries. The original rural character has been significantly weakened by urban influences with some pockets of interest. The area is classified as rolling lowland farmland but is heavily influenced by the A483, Mold Road. Other roads and rail corridors sub-divide the wider area, with pylons, views of housing & industry, mining & quarrying a frequent occurrence; although relatively fragmented by development, the area has not suffered as much visual degradation as the adjacent aspect area WRXHMVS038 and the area is noted as being vulnerable to further fragmentation of the remaining rural areas by development and suburbanisation.

- 3.21 The aspect area essentially engenders many of the visual and sensory responses of road corridors throughout the area and displays no or few features that are either rare, representative or of particular value to adjacent aspect areas or visual and sensory criteria. There is a relatively strong visual unity within the aspect due to the constant presence of the road corridor and the elements associated with that; however the general quality of the wider rural area and standard of management is of a higher evaluation than the adjacent areas. Views are available predominantly to the west but are rarely of picturesque quality or containing aesthetically pleasing or attractive elements other than at long distance level of the rising upland to the west. The nature of a road corridor means settlement and industry/commercial retail are associated within and adjacent to the transport corridor - although not of large scale this development is continuous and as such further undermines the integrity of the aspect area and is often inharmonious in its scale, colouring and materials used.
- 3.22 Ultimately, the A483 Mold Road Corridor aspect area has been given a moderate (or medium) sensitivity as there is a relatively strong visual unity within the aspect due to the constant presence of the road corridor and the elements associated with that; however, the areas and elements that may make this aspect different from other road corridors elsewhere in the study area and beyond - i.e attractive views, picturesque landscape elements, varied and interesting topography are absent. The aspect engenders many of the visual and sensory responses of road corridors throughout the area and displays no or few features that are either rare, representative or of particular value to adjacent aspect areas or visual and sensory criteria.
- 3.23 More locally within the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area, the characteristics of the visual landscape can be characterised as follows:
- Visually varied and complex, including lowland, valleys and hill and scarp areas.
 - Characteristic undulating hill slopes with wooded valleys.
 - Views towards Wrexham and the lowlands.
 - Urban villages and Wrexham linked by roads crossing open lowland farmland area.
 - Scattered groups of buildings in local Cefn sandstone and stone-built village cores, individuality in later additions but much standardised modern housing development.

- 3.24 The proposals would result in a major alteration to the visual and sensory experience within or adjacent to the application site with the open nature of views from the urban fringe being replaced by a modern housing development most likely two storeys in scale. This would essentially extend the settlement limits to the north creating a newly defined urban/rural fringe along Bottom Road; however, the proposals could draw from the characteristics of the surrounding built form (though this would be the subject of a future application for reserved matters). The generally attractive views and the focus of the viewers' attention is to the west and the higher rising upland of Ruabon Mountain and the proposed development would result in a minor alteration to this baseline from the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area. The scheme would seek opportunities to enhance existing vegetation cover with a view to restoring and reinforcing adjacent field patterns where feasible; however, it is acknowledged that the highway at Bottom Road would need to be widened which would result in the loss of hedgerows to facilitate. Such work would need clearances for sightlines, road widening and minimal interference in hedgerow (within the overall West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area). The adjacent farmland does appear well managed in terms of maintaining field boundaries but is otherwise intensively farmed pasture and occasional arable fields which would remain unaffected by the proposals. Overall whilst the proposed housing would inevitably change the visual and sensory experience along Bottom Road and to a lesser extent Top Road, beyond this the effects would quickly dissipate. From the Mold Road Corridor there would be no more than a very minor alteration at worst and in reality the scheme would be unlikely to be appreciated due to the change in topography, railway line and associated planting that runs parallel with the line, which all combine to restrict views to the west at this point. Subsequently whilst there would be some greater localised effects inevitably with a housing scheme of this scale within the context of the wider West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area, the scheme would result in no more than a minor alteration to the baseline conditions which would result in a low magnitude of effect and subsequently a minor/moderate significance of effect.

Historic Landscape

- 3.25 Within the LANDMAP database the site lies within the Windy Hill aspect area, which as can be seen in the GIS modelling within Appendix E has a sensitivity value of moderate. The aspect area is shown in the following map (shown in full in Appendix E) illustrating the different sensitivities within the surrounding area:

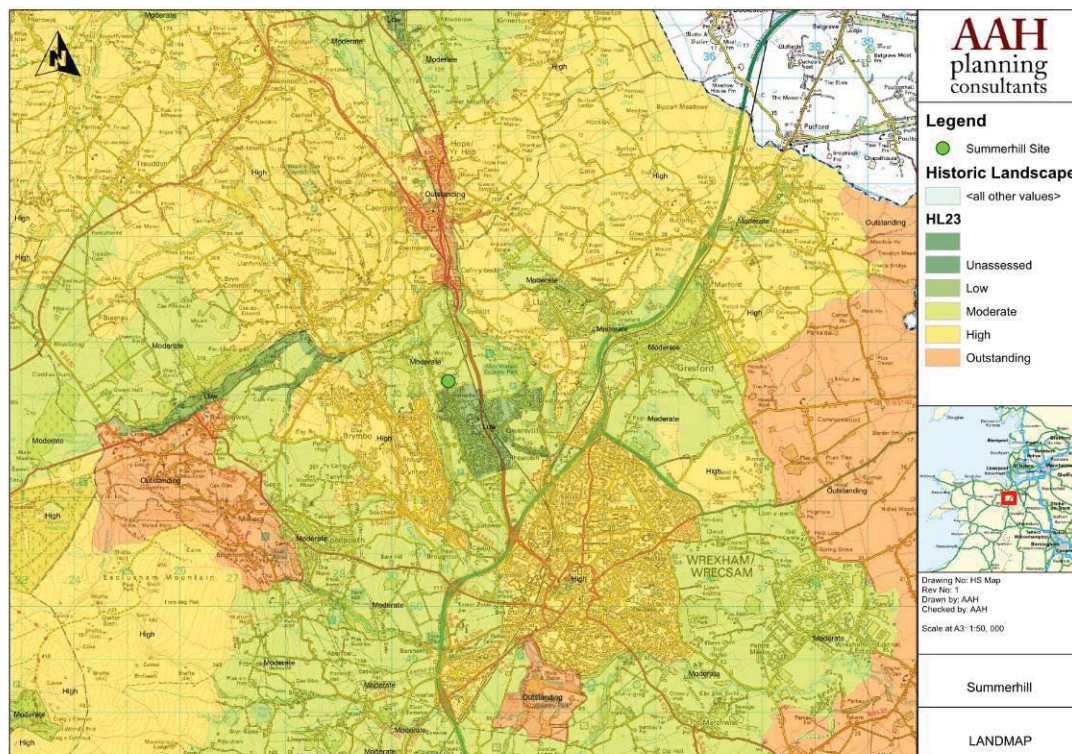


Image 3.6: Historic Landscape Aspect Area

- 3.26 The Windy Hill aspect area consists of a swath of mixed, irregular, predominantly hedged fields occupying the Gwenfro and Moss valleys to the west and east of Brymbo and its former industrial areas. The area is characterised by isolated post medieval farmsteads and a wide variety of mines, collieries, brick and tile works and other industrial remains. It also contains the minor settlement of Berse Drelincourt and an isolated moated site at Lower Berse, as well as a small area of very degraded parkland at Gwersyllt. The south of the area is crossed by Offa's Dyke and it is bounded on its north by the line of the Roman road from Caer Gai to Chester. It comprises a distinctive area of fieldscape surrounding the industrial valley-settlements north-west of Wrexham. There is a diffuse area of mixed fields wrapped around a number of industrial settlements but lacking significant historical foci, although the passage of Offa's and Wat's Dykes lifts its value slightly to the moderate (or medium sensitivity).
- 3.27 More locally within the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area, the characteristics of the historic landscape can be characterised as follows:
- Countryside has remnants of ridge and furrow, regular and irregular fields, but much land has been disturbed.

- Most settlement is related to 19th and 20th century mining and industry.
- Remnants of Bryn y Gaer pre-historic military hillfort at Pentre Broughton and the route of Offa's dyke can be identified.
- Brymbo steelworks heritage area and Plas Power colliery buildings have been preserved.
- Network of disused industrial railway lines crosses area.

3.28 This has been identified in LANDMAP as primarily an agricultural area despite the presence of the museum at Minera, and the urban village of Gwersyllt immediately bordering the application site. Lead-mining has been considered part of the (secondary) cultural essence of this landscape in LANDMAP, though is not overly predominant at the application site which is more agricultural in character. The archaeological records within the area date to the following periods:

- Prehistoric
- Bronze Age
- Medieval (to 1536)
- Post Medieval (1536+)
- Recent

3.29 The land proposed for the residential development does not contain any ridge of furrow and has little heritage value of significance. The scheme would result in no direct impact on any feature of significant heritage value. Whilst the field system would alter at the application site through the introduction of housing, this would result in a major change to the baseline at a micro level; however in the context of the overall West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area, the scheme would result in no more than a very minor alteration to the heritage values associated with the landscape. The housing to the south which the scheme would appear linked to the most is of no heritage value and as such the scheme would be compatible with these houses. Overall there would be no more than a very minor alteration to the historic values of the sub-area which would result in a negligible magnitude of effect and a negligible significance of effect.

Cultural Landscape

- 3.30 Within the LANDMAP database the site lies within the Mynydd Rhiwabon Esclusham (lower slopes) aspect area which as can be seen in the GIS modelling within Appendix E has a sensitivity value of high. The aspect area is shown in the following map (shown in full in Appendix E) illustrating the different sensitivities within the surrounding area.

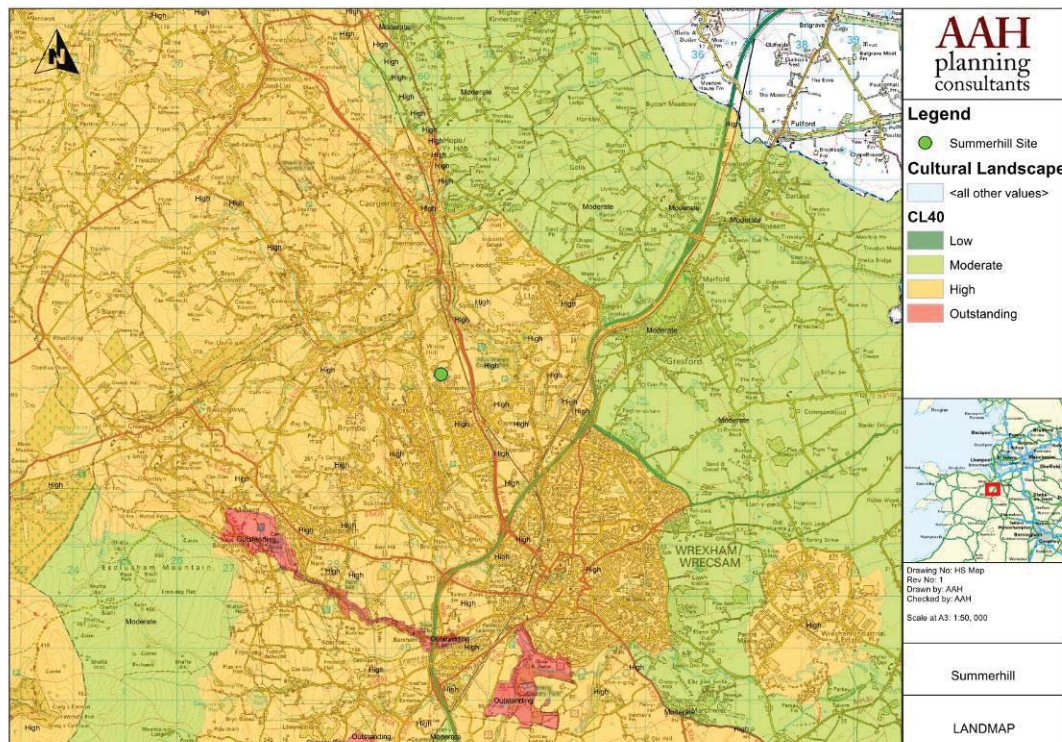


Image 3.7: Cultural Landscape Aspect Area

- 3.31 The Mynydd Rhiwabon Esclusham (lower slopes) aspect area is now devoted largely to sheep-rearing but which has historically been exploited for lead and coal. The lead-mining history of the area is interpreted at Minera. Less is known about coal-mining, ironworking or the agricultural past. This has been identified as primarily an agricultural area despite the presence of the museum at Minera. Lead-mining has been considered part of the (secondary) cultural essence of this landscape. It is therefore given a high value and sensitivity as an example of a landscape that is still seeing active farming use and which articulates the cultural meaning of former ways of wresting a living from the environment.
- 3.32 More locally within the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area, the characteristics of the cultural landscape can be characterised as follows:

- Urban villages retain their own cultural identity, but this is becoming weakened;
- Area is affected by A483 corridor, which separates it from Wrexham, but increases accessibility to commuters;
- Agriculture is still of some importance but horticulture is an increasing land use.

3.33 The application site is located on the northern fringe of Summerhill, Gwersyllt where the characteristics are currently associated with the urban village but also agriculture with the site essentially acting as a transition between the two elements. The proposals for housing development in this location would cumulatively increase the urban village and erode the agricultural cultural values. There would be an opportunity in any design to ensure that the scheme is designed to draw from the cultural values of the settlement, but this would be the subject of a detailed application involving the layout, appearance and planting. This would not be able to be assessed in an outline application seeking the principle of development only. Overall the impact on the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area would result in no more than a very minor impact on the cultural values with a negligible magnitude of effect and negligible significance of effect ensuing.

Determining Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity

3.34 Attached as Appendix C is the tabulated Landscape Impact Assessment which assesses the landscape aspect categories to provide an overall picture of the resulting landscape impact and defines the sensitivity of each category. Sensitivity is the degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without detrimental effects on its character and will vary with:

- existing land use;
- the pattern and scale of the landscape;
- visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;
- the scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape;
- the value placed on the landscape.

- 3.35 Landscape capacity describes the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type. This area continues to accommodate profound changes, but is vulnerable to the further loss of local distinctiveness, and coalescence of villages because of continuing development pressure. The small scale of the ridges and valleys means they are sensitive to large scale development, masts and power lines, and inappropriate engineered landforms. As can be seen in Appendix C, the Geological, Landscape Habitats, Visual & Sensory, Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape categories have been assessed as having a Medium, High, Medium, Medium and High sensitivity respectively. The land to the north leading to Windy Hill and including the top section of the field is within the Strategic Landscape Area as designated by the Local Planning Authority but the majority of the site lies outside of this local designation with a higher sensitivity. On balance and taking the median and mode average, overall the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area is considered to be of medium sensitivity to change.

Summary of Effects

- 3.36 As outlined previously the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys is the largest and most varied of four character areas in Wrexham which have a mixed rural and urban landscape. The other areas are Chirk, Rhosllannerchrugog - Rhostyllen, and Cefn Mawr. This sub-area is a complex area of former mining villages, industry, farmland and woodland in a landscape of distinct ridges and valleys which are aligned towards Wrexham town. It has been defined as having a medium sensitivity within Appendix C of this LVIA. The proposed development would result in a minor alteration to the visually varied and complex, including lowland, valleys and hill and scarp areas through the built form on this northern side of Summerhill. The characteristic undulating hill slopes with wooded valleys would be relatively unaffected with no direct impact and only indirect effects in the setting of Windy Hill to the north. The characteristic views towards Wrexham and the lowlands from Bottom Road and to a lesser extent Top Road would be affected but beyond this the effects would quickly dissipate. The characteristic roads linking the urban villages and Wrexham by crossing open lowland farmland area would be entirely unaffected by the housing due to its location at the edge of Summerhill off Bottom Road. Furthermore the scattered groups of buildings in local Cefn sandstone and stone-built village cores would be unaffected due to the location of development, instead the scheme would relate to the much more standardised modern housing development which is also characteristic of the area. In this respect, the scheme would result in no more than a minor alteration to the overall West Wrexham Ridges and

Valleys sub area resulting in a low magnitude of effect and a minor/moderate adverse significance of effect. The overall impact of this residential development on the character of the application site can be considered to result in a loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the baseline such as the underlying grassland habitat and some loss of hedgerows. Nevertheless this would not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape of the site and its setting as an expansion of the settlement to the north seen against the backdrop of the modern housing found within Summerhill Park.

- 3.37 In all cases, the effects would be over the long term (5 + years) and the impact would, ultimately, also be irreversible and thus any effects would be permanent.

4.0 Visual Impact Assessment

Viewpoint Selection

- 4.1 This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) has been prepared taking into account a number of different visual receptors in the area, and in particular the closest and most sensitive receptors, taking into account residential properties, road users, recreational routes of recreational places of value and heritage assets. As can be seen within the resultant VIA table in Appendix D, there is often a cross over where, for example, a heritage asset is also a residential property or the photomontage has been prepared from a road but reflects the view from a residential property as well. These viewpoints are shown in the following image:



Image 4.1: Viewpoints of the Application Site from the Immediate Area

- 4.2 An appraisal on site concluded that views were mostly visible from the immediate surroundings due to the character of the area consisting of hedgerows, rolling landform dense tree belts along the railway line and the settlement of Summerhill. Subsequently

photos were obtained from a range of viewpoints and directions, illustrating the potential effects from these more sensitive areas.

Protected Landscapes

- 4.3 The following image shows the application site in relation to the nearest protected landscapes:



Image 4.2: Map Showing the Application Site in Relation to Protected Landscapes

- 4.4 The map also shows ecological designations which aren't designated for their landscape values and subsequently have been discounted from this assessment; as can be seen though there is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to the south-east of the site. This is known as the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB and is approximately 5km away from the site and includes parts of the counties of Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham in North East Wales. At its northernmost tip, it virtually touches the coast at Prestatyn Hillside and extends as far south as the remote Berwyn Mountains. Its western edge traces the Vale of Clwyd, a remarkable chain of peaks crowned with hillforts, the Morwynion Valley and the Vale of Llangollen. To the east, the foothills of the Dee Estuary and the Clwydian Range give way to Llandegla Moors, Ruabon Mountains, Esclusham Mountain, the World Heritage Site of Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal and the National Trust's Chirk Castle. At approximately

5km despite there being a number of high points in the AONB where panoramic views can be achieved; such as the summit of Esclusham Mountain at this distance and given the intervening buildings in Summerhill there would be no impact on views to or from the AONB.

Protected Heritage Receptors

- 4.4 In terms of heritage assets, it is not the purpose of the VIA that would be for a Heritage Statement to undertake. Nevertheless, it does give the opportunity to understand the visual relationship between these protected assets and the proposed residential development. Subsequently, this VIA has also taken into account some of the more sensitive assets which are shown in the following map:

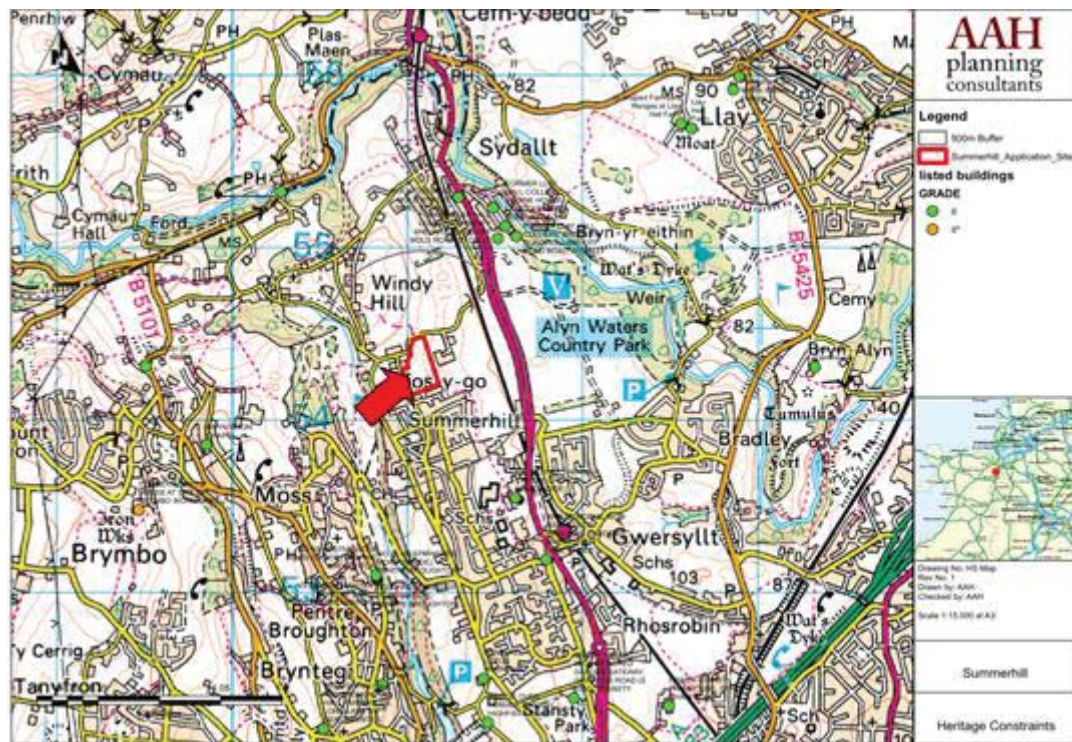


Image 4.3: Nearest Heritage Assets

- 4.5 The green and orange circles in the map above demonstrate the location of the nearest listed buildings. There are a limited number of listed buildings within the wider area. The nearest listed buildings are located outside of a 500m buffer from the site and at this distance, landscape features such as the suburban buildings in Summerhill, tree belts and hedgerows combining with the change in topography, all serve to limit views.
- 4.6 Arguably of most significant in the locality is the Church Of The Holy Trinity, Church Lane (S Side) which is a Grade II listed building. The church is a prominent landmark in Gwersyllt, and

a well-detailed example of High Victorian church building which is of particular interest for the retention of many of its original fittings. The church was built 1850-51 to designs of Thomas Penson, architect, of Wrexham. It is listed for its architectural, historical and cultural interest but none of these aspects of special interest would be affected by the proposed development to the north-west of the site. Given the location of the site, it is not considered that there would be any visual impact either to or from this church in views. Furthermore, reviewing other listed buildings and their location it appears unlikely that there would be any visual impact on any designated heritage asset.

Recreational Receptors

- 4.7 Recreational receptors can include public footpaths, cycle ways, scenic drives or parks and public gardens where views of the countryside can form important features of the enjoyment associated with these receptors. In this particular case, recreational receptors include the footpath skirting the southern boundary and the footpath leading to Windy Hill in particular. These are shown in the following map:

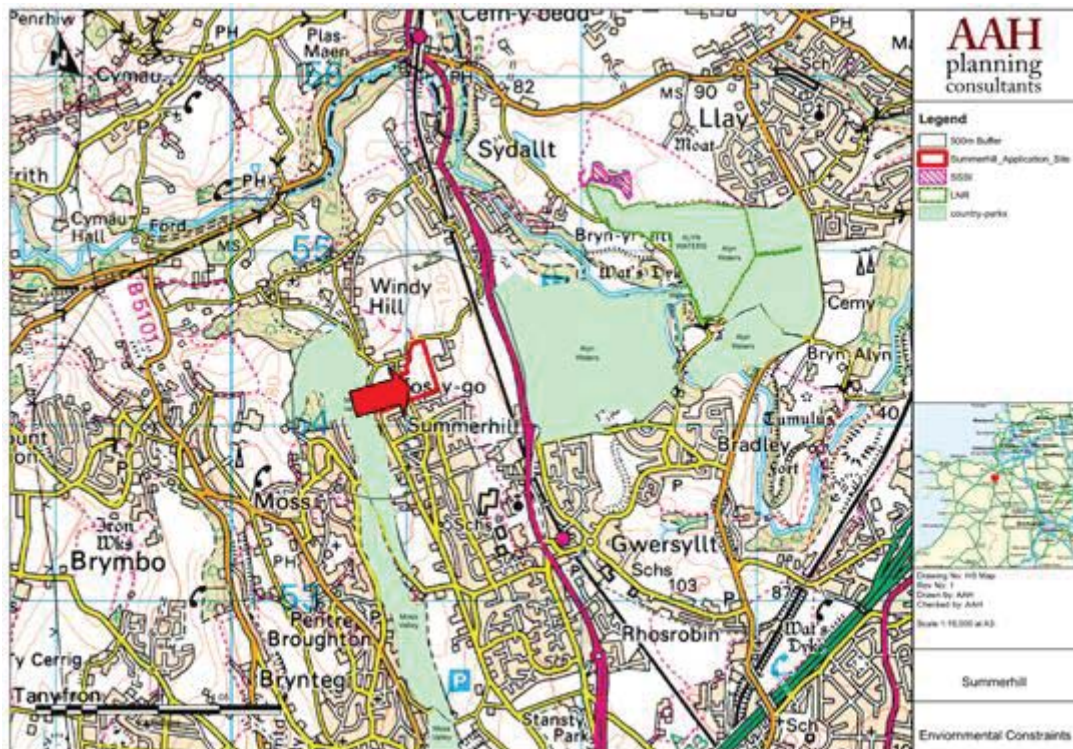


Image 4.4: Recreational Receptors within the Area

- 4.8 In terms of designations there are Country Parks to the east and west of the site at Alwyn Waters and Moss Valley respectively. The Alwyn Waters Country Park is the largest country

park in the Wrexham area, Alyn Waters is situated in the beautiful Alyn Valley. There are a variety of woodland, grassland and riverside walks throughout the Park. The Park is split into two, either side of the River Alyn. During the 16th century, the Park was part of a large country estate with Gwersyllt Hall as the focal point. The hall was eventually demolished in 1910 due to mining subsidence and in 1953 MacAlpines bought the land to open quarries on the Gwersyllt and Llay sides of the Park. Wrexham Maelor Borough Council bought much of the land in 1988 and designated the area as a country park in 1989. Whilst much of the views from within the Park are enclosed by the variety of woodland on offer there are frequently views out to the wider landscape and the rolling hills including Windy Hill to the west; however, at this distance and with existing landscape features, the views of the existing Summerhill Park are undistinguished and if visible in the worst case winter months would represent a very minor portion of the vista here. A negligible effect would subsequently ensue from the expansion of the Summerhill settlement in this direction.

4.9 Moss Valley is picturesque parkland situated between Gwersyllt and Brynteg, three miles north of Wrexham and west of the application site dropping down from Top Road. The V-shaped valley has wooded sides, two small lakes and areas of open grassland. The Valley provides a rich habitat for wildlife and is particularly noted for its birds. Moss Valley has an industrial past, and was once a major coal mining area. In 1973 the spoil heaps were reclaimed, but amongst the tranquil woodland and meadows, evidence of the old railways can still be found hidden in the park. The park has a number of footpaths running alongside the lakes and through woodland of oak and beech. The paths often follow the old tramways and railway lines that were once used to extract the coal and sandstone from the valley. Although the coal mines have long since gone, the small sandstone quarries still exist offering excellent wildlife habitats hidden away amongst the trees. The Moss Valley Fishing Club uses the lake by the main car park. Due to the change in topography with the land dropping from Top Road westerly into the V-shaped valley there would be no views of the application site from this Country Park despite its close proximity.

4.10 In terms of national trails the nearest passes Alyn Waters Country Park. It is known as Wat's Dyke Way which runs 61 mile/99 kilometres following the earthwork known as Wat's Dyke. This is a 40 mile earthwork running through the northern Welsh Marches from Maesbury in Shropshire, passing to the east of Oswestry and on to Basingwerk Abbey on the River Dee estuary in Flintshire. It runs generally parallel to Offa's Dyke, sometimes within a few yards but never more than three miles away. North of Wrexham, the route returns to

pastoral countryside going via a deep valley to the Alyn Waters Country Park and on to the twin villages of Hope and Caergwrle in Flintshire. As with the assessment of effects from Alyn Waters Country Park whilst there are frequently views out to the wider landscape and the rolling hills including Windy Hill to the west, at this distance and with existing landscape features the views of the existing Summerhill Park are undistinguished and if visible in the worst case winter months would represent a very minor portion of the vista here. A negligible effect would subsequently ensue from the expansion of the Summerhill settlement in this direction.

- 4.11 As outlined previously, the main effects on recreational receptors would be the effects on the nearest Public Rights of Way (PRoW) which in this case would be the impact on the public footpath which skirts the field boundary to the south and the public footpath leading to Windy Hill to the north. From the latter footpath, the proposed development would be mostly screened from view due to the hedge but there are gaps which does allow an elevated open view looking south toward Summerhill. The application site is visible here and is seen in the foreground to Summerhill Park residential properties. The proposals would see a marked change in this with the settlement limits effectively closer to the viewer, but this would not in itself change how the wider panoramic and characteristics of the view would be appreciated with only a minor change overall. A low magnitude of effect would ensue.
- 4.12 The footpath on the southern boundary follows the housing in Summerhill Park and runs eastward eventually turning south to lead to the school. Viewpoint 1 and 2 show how the view changes along the footpath at its worst points. The view in Viewpoint 1 is from the entrance of the public footpath from Summerhill Park and shows the existing grassland to the rear of these properties. Whilst the rear of the properties at ground floor are bordered by fencing limiting some views it is inevitable that there would be a major change in the appreciation of this view. The grassland would be lost to housing and its associated road layout and landscaping. Yet this would also be compatible with the existing housing in Summerhill Park and so would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue. From Viewpoint 2, the view allows open expansive views to the east due to the change in topography. Toward the application site, the land rises and is bordered by a hedgerow which would be retained in any scheme. The residential properties in Summerhill Park dominate the built form here. There would be an inevitable change in the perception of the view to the north-west; however, the main aspects of value are the wider panoramic

views east. The proposals would appear compatible with the suburban housing in Summerhill. Although the hedgerow would be retained, the housing would be clearly visible adjacent to those in Summerhill Park but because of this relationship it would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Subsequently, a medium magnitude of effect would ensue. Whilst the views would be altered with this scheme, there would be a need to make any design encompass the existing footpath so that the right of way is maintained. This can be achieved in any final design layout.

- 4.13 In all cases, the proposed residential development could be brought forward, so there is no impact in relation to the safety or physical infrastructure of users of any right of way, and any impact relates purely to the visual experience of the right of way network. Furthermore there is also the potential for increased permeability through the application site by providing footpath links and increased recreational amenities in a detailed Layout Plan, which could provide a link to the footpath from the south to that leading to Windy Hill offering some improved connectivity.
- 4.14 As can be seen in Appendix D, the proposed residential development would have a strong impact along the footpath that borders the site due to its close proximity but the effects would quickly dissipate with distance and those wider recreational receptors used by greater numbers; such as the two country parks and Wat's Dyke Way would see very minor effects with a negligible to nil magnitude of effect.

Residential Receptors

- 4.15 The proposed residential development would be positioned in close proximity to existing residential properties as ultimately it would be seen as an extension of the settlement limits. The nearest residential properties include those at Summerhill Park, along Bottom Road, Old Hall Farm and Old Hall. These and others in the wider area are shown in the following image:



Image 4.5: Map Showing Neighbouring Residential Properties to the Site

- 4.10 As can be seen in Appendix D, the proposed residential development would have a strong visual effect along the rear of Summerhill Park. These are a mixture of single and two storey properties and the ground floor rear would be partially screened by the fencing that defines their border; however, views would be inevitable as shown in Viewpoint 1. The view here is from the entrance of the public footpath from Summerhill Park and shows the existing grassland to the rear of these properties. Whilst the rear of the properties at ground floor is bordered by fencing limiting some views, it is inevitable that there would be a major change in the appreciation of this view. The grassland would be lost to housing and its associated road layout and landscaping. Yet this would also be compatible with the existing housing in Summerhill Park and so would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue. It is worth noting that this does not define an effect on neighbour amenity or living conditions merely an assessment of the change in view. There are common distances

between residential properties whereby an effect is not considered to harm living conditions and this is discussed in the Planning Statement submitted with the application.

- 4.11 Properties on Bottom Road are located to the north-west of the application site and are shown in Viewpoint 3. The properties here are orientated to front east. The nearest has a garage which projects at ground floor from the frontage restricting the angled views toward the site. The view would be altered more significantly from Bottom Road itself where the present appearance is of a transition zone between the countryside and the settlement. The existing built form in Summerhill Park is visible in the distance here and this would become much more pronounced as a result of this scheme yet it would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape with the surrounding built form. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue.
- 4.12 The views from adjacent to Old Hall Farm and Old Hall could not be fully established due to their location down a private driveway; however from inspection from adjacent to the entrance to the driveway it is apparent that views would be possible. The properties sit on the lower topography and Old Hall Farm is the closest property most likely to be affected as opposed to Old Hall which sits further down the slope and is more enclosed against the housing development than Old Hall Farm. The farmhouse appears to have its rear elevation facing toward the northern portions of the site and from upper floor windows (medium sensitivity) there would likely be more open views toward the application site than from the ground floor windows (high sensitivity) which appear to be more enclosed by boundary planting. The existing built form in Summerhill Park is visible in the distance here and this would become much more pronounced as a result of this scheme, yet it would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape with the surrounding built form. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue.
- 4.13 There are also likely to be other isolated properties or groups such as from Top Road, Caer Haf, Summerhill, further south along Bottom Rd, (around X331048, Y354073) and Cerney Rd these visual effects have been assessed in Appendix D as having a low to negligible magnitude of effect. Beyond these properties the effects would dissipate as other landscape features take effect; as such overall the Moderate/Major Adverse significance of effects are considered to be confined to the properties which immediately abut the site or lie within close proximity.

- 4.14 The proposed development would be taking place on a site adjacent to the Summerhill Park housing estate and development limits of Summerhill, hence the introduction of residential dwelling units would not be uncharacteristic. Furthermore, the proposed dwelling units would accord with the council's interface distances to ensure that existing residential amenity is still protected.

Road Users Receptors

- 4.15 The proposal would have an access road that connected with Bottom Road, which links to the Summerhill settlement to the south and Mold Road to the north-east. This road at present when exiting Summerhill becomes a quiet country lane which would be classed as being of medium sensitivity. Mold Road would be considered low sensitivity due to the speed of traffic. Top Road to the west shares similar characteristics with Bottom Road and as such would be considered to be of medium sensitivity too. This is shown in the following map:

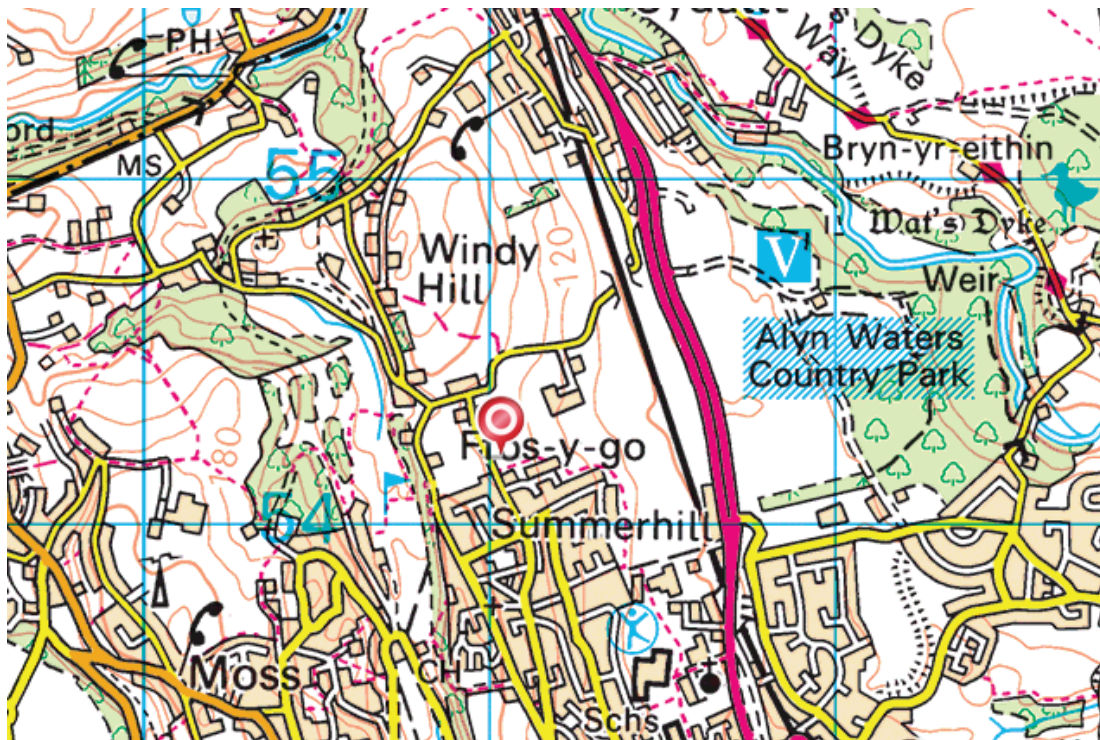


Image 4.6: Map Showing the Local Road Network

- 4.16 Bottom Road would be the highway which would inevitably be affected the most. It would require physical direct works to the highway which would include clearance of the hedgerow and road widening to achieve two way traffic with passing places installed. The combination of this would mean that from the length of highway between Summerhill Park and Mayfield

Farm, the proposed scheme would completely change the character of this micro section landscape for a long period of time or permanently resulting in a major magnitude of effect. It is important to understand this change in the wider landscape where the effects would be far less pronounced. From the other highways that do not border the site the effects would be far reduced.

- 4.17 Viewpoint 4 shows the view from Top Road, which is a narrow highway enclosed by hedgerows which limit views toward the application site along much of the road. At this point a dwelling faces to the east in the general direction of the site and the two existing houses on Bottom Road are clearly visible here. The proposed development would be further east than these properties and slightly over the brow of the hill meaning it would be unlikely that the development in its entirety would be visible, but there would be a minor change in the existing view characteristics with the upper portions of houses likely to be visible. A low magnitude of effect would subsequently ensue.
- 4.18 From Mold Road the views would be intercepted by the change in topography and tree belt that runs alongside the railway line. Here with the orientation of the highway and speed of traffic there would be unlikely to be any change in view. Beyond this whilst there are likely to be some change in effects for road users these would be primarily linked with those identified residential receptors and the associated highways they border. In this respect, there are also likely to be other road receptors such as from Top Road, Caer Haf, Summerhill, further south along Bottom Rd, (around X331048, Y354073) and Cerney Rd these visual effects have been assessed in Appendix D as having a low to negligible magnitude of effect. Beyond these roads the effects would dissipate as other landscape features take effect.
- 4.19 In this respect, in terms of road receptors by far the biggest would be the visual impact from Bottom Road itself along the boundaries of the application site where there would be physical works required and an inevitable change in the appreciation of the views when travelling on this small section of route.

Summary of Effects

- 4.20 In accordance with the methodology within Appendix A, the proposed residential development would always have a long term effect as the built development would be a permanent feature within views.

4.21 Overall appraising the visual impact within Appendix D, it is considered that the visual impact would be broadly confined to a limited zone of visual influence which extends from the northern fringes of Summerhill along Top Road, Bottom Road and the railway line northwards to the summit of Windy Hill. Beyond this whilst there are likely to be isolated longer distant views; such as those elevated views from Cerney Road or distant lowland views looking up from Alyn Water Country Park. These latter distant views would have no more than negligible magnitudes of effect. From the closer viewpoints the effects would vary with distance and perspective. Only from Bottom Road where the physical direct impacts would result in a transformation of this stretch of highway would the effects be seen as greater at this point. In all instances the proposed housing development would be seen as a continuation of the Summerhill settlement and in particular the modern housing development in Summerhill Park. In that context the housing would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue for the majority of receptors.

5.0 Can the Impact be Mitigated?

5.1 Given the scale of the proposed residential development there are no mitigation measures possible that would screen the whole proposal from view in its entirety; however, there are a number of considerations that can assist with the mitigation of the proposed development:

- Ensure the design of the dwellings adds to the character of the landscape.
- To create a positive landscape structure which works with the existing landscape features and lie of the land, breaking up the built form as well as integrating the proposed development into the context of the surrounding area.
- To contribute positively and enhance the existing green infrastructure associated with existing hedgerows with the loss of hedgerows compensated for through a detailed landscaping scheme.
- To create an attractive setting for the new and existing surrounding properties, ensuring residential amenity is protected by respecting the council's interface distances.
- To minimise any adverse visual effects and wherever possible to enhance the view from sensitive visual receptor locations.
- To enhance the biodiversity of the site through the creation of new habitats and green links.
- To work with and create a network of public footpaths and open spaces which provide an opportunity for the enjoyment, recreation and understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of the site.

5.2 During the feasibility stage consideration has been given to means of reducing the visual effect and this included the initial site selection. The field has been selected as it is on the edge of an urban settlement which has been targeted for growth by the LPA, hence it would be seen in context with Summerhill Park housing estate to the south. Two storey dwelling houses have been selected to ensure that the development is in character with the Summerhill Park built environment and does not visually dominate the settlement's roofscape. Positioning the houses away from the site boundary, sited behind existing and

new landscape infrastructure would also help to reduce the visual effect and help to assimilate it into its rural edge. The proposed planting scheme, particularly along the redefined western boundary of the site, would help minimise the potential visual effects and whilst this will take some time to establish, it would nonetheless result in a good visual buffer softening the identified visual effects from this proposed residential area. The precise details of this planting scheme could be reserved by condition.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Wales is divided into 48 regional scale landscape character areas. Each has a distinctive sense of place that enables us to recognise it as a single area, e.g. a range of hills or a major urban area. In this case the application site falls within the area 13, referring to Deeside and Wrexham. Within each area different parts will have their own identity as well. Local detail is recorded in the LANDMAP Landscape Information System. The following LANDMAP characterisations apply to the application site:

- Cultural Landscape – Mynydd Rhiwabon Esclusham (lower slopes);
- Geological Landscape – Sydalit;
- Historic Landscape - Windy Hill;
- Landscape Habitats - Talwrn Grassland;
- Visual & Sensory - A483 Mold Road Corridor.

6.2 As outlined in Section 3, the site lies within the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area which is the largest and most varied of four character areas in Wrexham which have a mixed rural and urban landscape. The other areas are Chirk, Rhosllannerchrugog - Rhostyllen, and Cefn Mawr. This sub area is a complex area of former mining villages, industry, farmland and woodland in a landscape of distinct ridges and valleys which are aligned towards Wrexham town. The land to the north leading to Windy Hill and including the top section of the field is within the Strategic Landscape Area as designated by the Local Planning Authority but the majority of the site lies outside of this local designation with a higher sensitivity. On balance and taking the median and mode average, overall the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area is considered to be of medium sensitivity to change.

6.3 The proposed development would result in a minor alteration to the visually varied and complex, including lowland, valleys and hill and scarp areas through the built form on this northern side of Summerhill. The characteristic undulating hill slopes with wooded valleys would be relatively unaffected with no direct impact and only indirect effects in the setting of Windy Hill to the north. The characteristic views towards Wrexham and the lowlands from Bottom Road and to a lesser extent Top Road would be affected but beyond this the effects would quickly dissipate. The characteristic roads linking the urban villages and Wrexham by

crossing open lowland farmland area would be entirely unaffected by the housing due to its location at the edge of Summerhill off Bottom Road. Furthermore the scattered groups of buildings in local Cefn sandstone and stone-built village cores would be unaffected due to the location of development, instead the scheme would relate to the much more standardised modern housing development which is also characteristic of the area. In this respect the scheme would result in no more than a minor alteration to the overall West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area resulting in a low magnitude of effect and a minor/moderate adverse significance of effect. Whilst the overall impact of this residential development on the character of the application site can be considered to result in a loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the baseline; such as the underlying grassland habitat and some loss of hedgerows, but this would not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape of the site and its setting as an expansion of the settlement to the north, seen against the backdrop of the modern housing found within Summerhill Park.

- 6.4 Overall appraising the visual impact within Appendix D, it is considered that the visual impact would be broadly confined to a limited zone of visual influence which extends from the northern fringes of Summerhill along Top Road, Bottom Road and the railway line northwards to the summit of Windy Hill. Beyond this whilst there are likely to be isolated longer distant views; such as those elevated views from Cerney Road or distant lowland views looking up from Alyn Water Country Park. These latter distant views would have no more than negligible magnitudes of effect. From the closer viewpoints the effects would vary with distance and perspective. Only from Bottom Road where the physical direct impacts would result in a transformation of this stretch of highway would the effects be seen as greater at this point. In all instances the proposed housing development would be seen as a continuation of the Summerhill settlement and in particular the modern housing development in Summerhill Park. In that context the housing would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue for the majority of receptors
- 6.5 In all cases the impact would be over the long term (5 + years); and the impact would, ultimately, be irreversible, and thus any impact would be permanent. There is however opportunities to offer mitigation of value as part of the scheme and the resulting approval of reserved matters application. Following mitigation measures the expected visual effects will reduce with many of the views being unaffected. All of the identified visual effects are local

in nature with no more than negligible effects on the wider appreciation of the surrounding countryside's landscape and visual values.

APPENDIX A – METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

APPENDIX A – METHODOLOGY ADOPTED

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both the landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity (*Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013, p4*).

The process of assessing the visual and landscape impact of this application has been guided by the document 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2013)' (the "GLVIA"). The GLVIA provides the main guidance document of the production of LVIA reports. LVIA applies to all projects that could require a formal EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment), but also includes projects that may be assessed informally, where the principles and process of LVIA can also be used to assist in the 'appraisal' of forms of land use change or development that fall outside the requirements of the EIA Directive and Regulations.

The GLVIA, in context of the EIA Directive, places an emphasis on the identification of **likely significant** effects. This should embrace all types of effect and includes, for example, those that are positive/beneficial and negative/adverse, direct and indirect, and long and short term, as well as cumulative effects. The emphasis on **likely significant** effects also stresses the need for an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed and the nature of its likely effects.

In accordance with the guidance, the two components of the LVIA are:

1. **assessment of landscape effects:** assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;
2. **assessment of visual effects:** assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.

The interpretation of the GLVIA and the approach taken in our assessment is set out below.

Landscape Impact Assessment Methodology

Landscape Effects

The assessment of landscape effects firstly establishes the baseline landscape conditions, providing an understanding of the landscape in the area that may be affected – its constituent elements and the way this contributes to its overall character, sensitivity and susceptibility to change – drawing from desktop-based research of known sources of published information on the landscape of the site and surrounding area, and from visiting the site. This allows the individual landscape elements known as ‘landscape receptors’ to be identified, and the landscape effects to be subsequently described, based on the **nature of the receptor** (sensitivity) and the **nature of the effect** likely to occur (magnitude).

An assessment of the significance of effects is then made. Each effect is considered in terms of its *sensitivity*; the susceptibility of the landscape to change and the value attached to the receptor. The extent to which a landscape can accommodate change due to development varies according to a range of factors such as land use, the scale and pattern of the landscape, visual enclosure, quality of view and the value of the landscape. Changes to the fabric and character of a particular landscape area may affect the perceived value of that landscape, giving rise to changes in its quality. Finally, each effect is considered in terms of its *magnitude*; the size, scale and extent of the effect, its duration and reversibility, and the **significance of effect** subsequently calculated, based on a clearly defined assessment criteria of word scales in tabulated form (see Table 1.1, below). The significance of landscape effects ranges from negligible, through to minor, moderate and major. Such changes are described as either adverse or beneficial.

Establishing the Landscape Baseline

The Countryside Agency’s guidelines make a clear distinction between the characterisation process (in which the attributes of the landscape are described) and the judgment making process. This section of the assessment, the characterisation process, helps to establish the landscape baseline and aids subsequent judgements about the potential effects of the proposed development.

The Countryside Agency guidelines describe how landscape character assessments can be applied at different scales, from the national or European level to the parish level. Assessments are ideally prepared at different scales that should fit together as a nested series or a hierarchy of landscape character types and/or areas, such that each level of assessment adds more detail. The three main levels identified by The Countryside Agency are: national and regional scale; local authority scale;

and local scale. This assessment uses and presents a summary of the relevant published assessments at national and regional scale and local authority scales. These wider character assessments are then used to provide the context for the local scale landscape assessment for the application site.

The Countryside Agency's guidance recommends that the characterisation process should be based on an assessment of natural, cultural and social factors and aesthetic and perceptual factors. These factors have been examined for the site's surroundings, the existing site as it stands today, and the site as it would be following completion of the development.

Determining Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity

Topic Paper 6 of Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Wales seeks to define concepts of Capacity and Sensitivity. The following definitions are suggested:

- Overall landscape sensitivity refers primarily to the inherent sensitivity of the landscape itself, irrespective of the type of change that may be under consideration.
- Landscape sensitivity to a specific type of change is used where it is necessary to assess the sensitivity of the landscape to a particular change or development.
- Landscape capacity describes the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type.

Sensitivity is the degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development without detrimental effects on its character, and will vary with:

- Existing land use;
- The pattern and scale of the landscape;
- Visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors;
- The scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape;
- The value placed on the landscape.

Overall landscape sensitivity to change will be judged using a three point verbal scale of high, medium or low. Judgements are then made for each of the constituent aspects of sensitivity and these assessments are tabulated to provide a profile of a particular landscape area. An overview is then taken of the distribution of the assessments of each aspect and this is used to make an informed judgement about the sensitivity of the landscape to accommodate the specific change. The

following table provides the appropriate definitions for determining the sensitivity of specific components of a landscape character.

Sensitivity	Definition of Landscape Sensitivity
High	Important components of landscape of distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes.
Medium	A landscape of relatively common characteristics, reasonably tolerant of changes.
Low	A relatively unimportant landscape, the nature of which is tolerant of substantial change.

Table 1: Criteria for Assessing Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Determining Magnitude of Effects on Landscape Character

Table 2, below, provides a description of the criteria used to assess the magnitude of effects on landscape character:

Magnitude of Effect	Assessment
High	Total loss of or major alteration to key elements/ features/characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape and/or introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.
Medium	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape and/or introduction of elements that may be predominant, but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape.

Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline, i.e. pre-development landscape and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic within the surrounding landscape – approximating the ‘no change’ situation.
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Table 2: Assessing Magnitude of Effects on Landscape and Visual Receptors

In general terms, changes to the actual landscape fabric will occur:

- within the site boundary for the proposed development;
- around the immediate setting and
- at the scale of the broader landscape type and character area.

The nature and magnitude of landscape impacts will change during the construction and development process. Some impacts may be adverse but only effecting the short term, whereas others may be minor impacts with residual effects, which may be of a more permanent nature. In addition, some impacts could be significantly mitigated by landscape and other measures, which could have benefit in the longer term.

Potential impacts that may occur during the stages of the proposed development are summarised below.

Short term impacts are those that occur during the construction period. These are considered as follows:

- Site access, delivery and traffic movements
- Earthworks and materials stockpiles
- Construction equipment and plant
- Utilities, including water and lighting
- Temporary parking
- Site compound and accommodation

At completion or the operation stage, the impacts are considered for the proposed development at point of handover from the contractor to the developer or new owners of the development. The condition of the site will be fully operational and all landscape works will have been implemented and plant stock will be at a young stage. All paraphernalia associated with construction such as hoardings, tree protection and site compounds will have been removed.

Residual Impacts are taken to be those that occur for duration of up to 15 years or more after completion reflecting any increased effects of mitigation over time due to the physical growth of the landscape structure:

- Presence of built structures and road infrastructure
- Improved landscape and green infrastructure

Residual impacts are similar to the impacts on completion but may be partially or wholly mitigated by the proposed landscape infrastructure, site management and other development proposals. That may not take full effect at completion. Consideration of the impacts during the operation stage has been considered the most relevant for this assessment.

Determining Significance of Effects on Landscape Character

The potential significance of landscape effects is determined by a combination of the magnitude of the potential effects and the sensitivity of the landscape character to change. These two variables can be correlated as illustrated in Table 3 below. Therefore, a landscape effect of low magnitude may be assessed to have a moderate effect in a highly sensitive landscape such as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or a National Park. In general, the following principles apply:

	Magnitude of Effect			
Sensitivity to Change	Negligible	Low	Medium	High
High	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate/Major	Major
Medium	Negligible	Minor/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Major
Low	Negligible	Minor	Minor/Moderate	Moderate

Table 3: Principles of Assessing Significance of Landscape Effects (Assessment Matrix)

The above consideration of the sensitivity of the landscape character with the magnitude of the potential effects provides an overall assessment of the potential significance of effects. However, this process is not a quantitative process; there is not an absolute scoring system, and although considerations are made according to recognised features and methods of working as outlined in this report, the correlation of the two factors is, in the end, a matter of professional judgement.

An assessment of the significance of an effect can be derived from the combination of the 'sensitivity' of a landscape and the 'magnitude' of the effect. Table 4 which follows, provides a brief definition of the full range of significance criteria. These ratings reflect the existing site condition, established use and existing planning consents, but also the nature and scale of the proposed development. Landscape effects may be beneficial or adverse, and are assigned a significance rating.

Significance	Definition
Negligible	The proposed scheme is appropriate in its context and may be difficult to differentiate from the surrounding landscape character.
Minor	The proposed scheme would cause a barely perceptible effect within the receiving landscape's characteristics.
Moderate	The proposed scheme would cause a noticeable difference to the landscape.
Major	The proposed scheme would completely change the character of the landscape for a long period of time or permanently.

Table 4: Landscape Effect Significance Definitions

Negligible effects can be derived from high, medium or low sensitivity combined with negligible magnitude.

The following standards are used in assessing whether the effects are short, medium or long term.

- Short term: < 12 months
- Medium term: 1 to 5 years
- Long term: > 5 years

In this application the proposed residential development, would have long term effects, which would be permanent with the effects ultimately being irreversible.

Visual Impact Assessment Methodology

Visual Effects

The assessment of visual effects describes the changes in the visual character of available views and in the visual amenity of particular receptors arising from the development. To establish important visual receptors, a digital mapping visibility exercise is undertaken to illustrate those areas of the landscape from which the development may or may not be experienced. From this, a range of viewpoints are selected to demonstrate the potential effects of the proposed development, taking account of a range of factors, including:

- the accessibility to the public;
- the potential number and sensitivity of viewers who may be affected;
- the viewing direction, distance (i.e. short, medium and long distance views) and elevation;
- the nature of the viewing experience (e.g. static views, views from settlements and views from sequential points along routes);
- the view type (e.g. panoramas, vistas and glimpses);
- the potential for cumulative views of the proposed development in conjunction with other developments.

The sensitivity of visual receptors and views will be dependent on the context of the view, the importance of the view and the nature of the receptor. The scale or magnitude of visual change is affected by scale, the degree of contrast, the permanence of the effect, the angle of view, distance and the extent of change.

Determining the Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Sensitive receptors are assessed on the basis of which points provide the clearest views of the site. Sensitivity of visual receptors is typically assessed by ascribing one of the following levels: high, medium or low sensitivity to change. The sensitivity of visual receptors and views will depend on the context of the view, the importance of the view and the nature of the receptor. Table 5, provides a description of the criteria used to define the sensitivity of the visual receptors:

Sensitivity	Definition of Visual Receptor
High	The principal views from residential buildings; beauty spots and picnic areas. Users of outdoor recreational facilities including recreational footpaths, cycle routes or rights of way, whose attention would be focused on the landscape; important landscape features with physical, cultural or historic attributes. Designated scenic drives.
Medium	People engaged in outdoor sports or recreation (other than appreciation of the landscape), attractive rural lanes and 'B' roads. Secondary views from residential buildings.
Low	Views from heavily industrialised areas or commercial buildings or commercially engaged pedestrians, whose attention may be focused on their work or activity rather than the wider landscape, people travelling through or past the landscape on A roads, train lines or other main transport routes.

Table 5: Criteria for Assessing Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Determining Magnitude of Effects on Visual Receptors

Magnitude is determined by the distance from the viewer, the extent of change in the field of vision, the proportion or number of views affected and the duration of each from each receptor, or a sequence of views that may have transient views (e.g. along a road).

Generally, greater weight is given to visual effects on public viewpoints than on private properties. Due to access restrictions, the magnitude of effect on view character for all receptors, including residential properties, is on the basis of ground level views (e.g. from the ground floor and garden level in the case of residential property).

Table 6, below, provides a description of the criteria used to assess the magnitude of effects on visual receptors:

Visual Receptor Magnitude	Assessment
High	Total loss of, or major alteration to, key elements/features/characteristics of the baseline view and/or introduction of elements considered to be totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving view.

Medium	Partial loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the view and/or introduction of elements that may be predominant, but may not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving view.
Low	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline view and/or introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving view.
Negligible	Very minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements/features/ characteristics of the baseline view and/or introduction of elements that are not uncharacteristic within the view – approximating the ‘no change’ situation.

Table 6: Assessing Magnitude of Effects on Landscape and Visual Receptors

Determining Significance of Effects on Visual Receptors

The potential significance of visual effects is determined by a combination of the magnitude of the potential effects and the sensitivity of the receptor to change. These two variables can be correlated as illustrated in Table 7. Therefore, a visual effect of low magnitude may be assessed to have a moderate effect from a highly sensitive receptor such as a residential property. Similarly, a low magnitude may have a moderate effect on a particularly sensitive visual receptor such as an important recreational route. In general, the following principles apply:

	Magnitude of Effect			
Sensitivity of Receptor to Change	Negligible	Low	Medium	High
High	Negligible	Moderate	Moderate/Major	Major
Medium	Negligible	Minor/Moderate	Moderate	Moderate/Major
Low	Negligible	Minor	Minor/Moderate	Moderate

Table 7: Principles of Assessing Significance of Visual Effects (Assessment Matrix)

The above consideration of the sensitivity of the receptors with the magnitude of the potential effects provides an overall assessment of the potential significance of effects. However, this process is not a quantitative process; there is not an absolute scoring system, and although considerations

are made according to recognised features and methods of working, as outlined in this report, the correlation of the two factors is, in the end, a matter of professional judgement. An assessment of the significance of an effect can be derived from the combination of the 'sensitivity' of a visual receptor and the 'magnitude' of the effect.

Table 8 provides a brief definition of the full range of significance criteria. These ratings reflect the existing site condition, established use and existing planning consents, but also the nature and scale of the proposed development. The visual effects arising from changes in the appearance of the view associated with the development and perceived by the visual receptor, may be beneficial or adverse, and are assigned a significance rating.

Significance	Definition
Negligible	The proposed scheme is appropriate in its view. It may be difficult to differentiate from its surroundings within the view, and would affect very few or no receptors.
Minor	The proposed scheme would result in a perceptible but limited visual effect and would affect few receptors.
Moderate	The proposed scheme would cause a noticeable difference within the view, and would affect several receptors.
Major	The proposed scheme would completely change the appearance of the view for a long period of time or permanently. It would affect many receptors.

Table 8: Visual Effect Significance Definitions

Negligible effects can be derived from high, medium or low sensitivity combined with negligible magnitude. The following standards are used in assessing whether the effects are short, medium or long term.

- Short term: < 12 months
- Medium term: 1 to 5 years
- Long term: > 5 years

In this application the proposed residential development, would have long term effects, which would be permanent with the effects ultimately being irreversible.

Glossary of Terms

Analysis (landscape)	The process of breaking the landscape into its component parts to understand how it is made up.
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Assessment (Landscape)	An umbrella term for description, classification and analysis of landscape.
Baseline	Record and analysis of existing landscape and visual conditions.
Biodiversity	The concept of variety in all species of plants and animals through which nature finds its balance.
Classification	A process of sorting the landscape into different types using selected criteria but without attaching relative values to different sorts of landscape.
Countryside	The rural environment and its associated communities (includes the coast).
Diversity	Where a variety of qualities or characteristics occurs.
Element	A component part of the landscape, e.g. roads, hedges and woods.
Enhancement	Landscape improvement through restoration, reconstruction or creation.
Environment	Our physical surroundings including air, water and land.
Field Pattern	The pattern of hedges and walls that define fields in farmed landscapes.
Heritage	Historic or cultural associations.
Indirect Impacts	Impacts on the environment, which are not a direct result of the development but are often produced away from it or as a result of a complex pathway.
Land Use	The primary use of the land, including both rural and urban activities.
Land cover	Combinations of land use and vegetation, that cover the land surface.
Landform	Combinations of slope and elevation, that produce the shape and form of the land.

Landscape	Human perception of the land conditioned by knowledge and identity with a place.
Landscape Capacity	The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without unacceptable adverse effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.
Landscape Character	The distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occurs consistently in a particular type of landscape, and how this is perceived by people. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement. It creates the particular sense of place of different areas of the landscape.
Landscape Characteristics	Landscape Characteristics refer to the combinations of landscape elements and features which make a particular contribution to the character of an area including experiential characteristics such as tranquillity and wilderness.
Landscape Character Type	A landscape type will have broadly similar patterns of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern discernible in maps and field survey records.
Landscape Effects	Change in the elements, characteristics, character and qualities of the landscape as a result of development. These effects can be positive or negative.
Landscape feature	A prominent eye-catching element, e.g. wooded hill top and church spire.
Landscape Quality	Is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.
Landscape Sensitivity	The extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale, without unacceptable adverse effects.
Landscape Value	The relative value or importance attached to a landscape (often as a basis for designation or recognition), which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wilderness, cultural associations or other conservation issues.
Magnitude	A combination of the scale, extent and duration of an effect.

Methodology	The specific approach and techniques used for a given study.
Mitigation	Measures, including any process, activity or design to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for adverse landscape and visual effects of a development project.
Receptor	Physical landscape resource, special interest or viewer group that will experience an effect.
Sense of place	The essential character and spirit of an area.
Sustainability	The principle that the environment should be protected in such a condition and to such a degree that ensures new development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Technique	Specific working process.
Threshold (significance)	A specified level in grading effects e.g. of magnitude, sensitivity or significance.
Visual Amenity	The value of a particular area or view in terms of what is seen.
Visual Impact	Change in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive (i.e. beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction).
Visual Envelope	Extent of potential visibility to or from a specific area or feature.
Visualisation	Computer simulation, photomontage or other technique to illustrate the appearance of a development.
ZTV	Zone of Theoretical Visibility. Theoretical area within which a proposed development may have an Visibility (ZTV) influence or effect on visual amenity based on computer tests which usually use a 'bald' landform surface without e.g. trees, hedgerows or built-up areas.
Zone of Visual Influence	Area within a ZTV from which a proposed development is likely to draw the eye of a casual observer, based on field observations.

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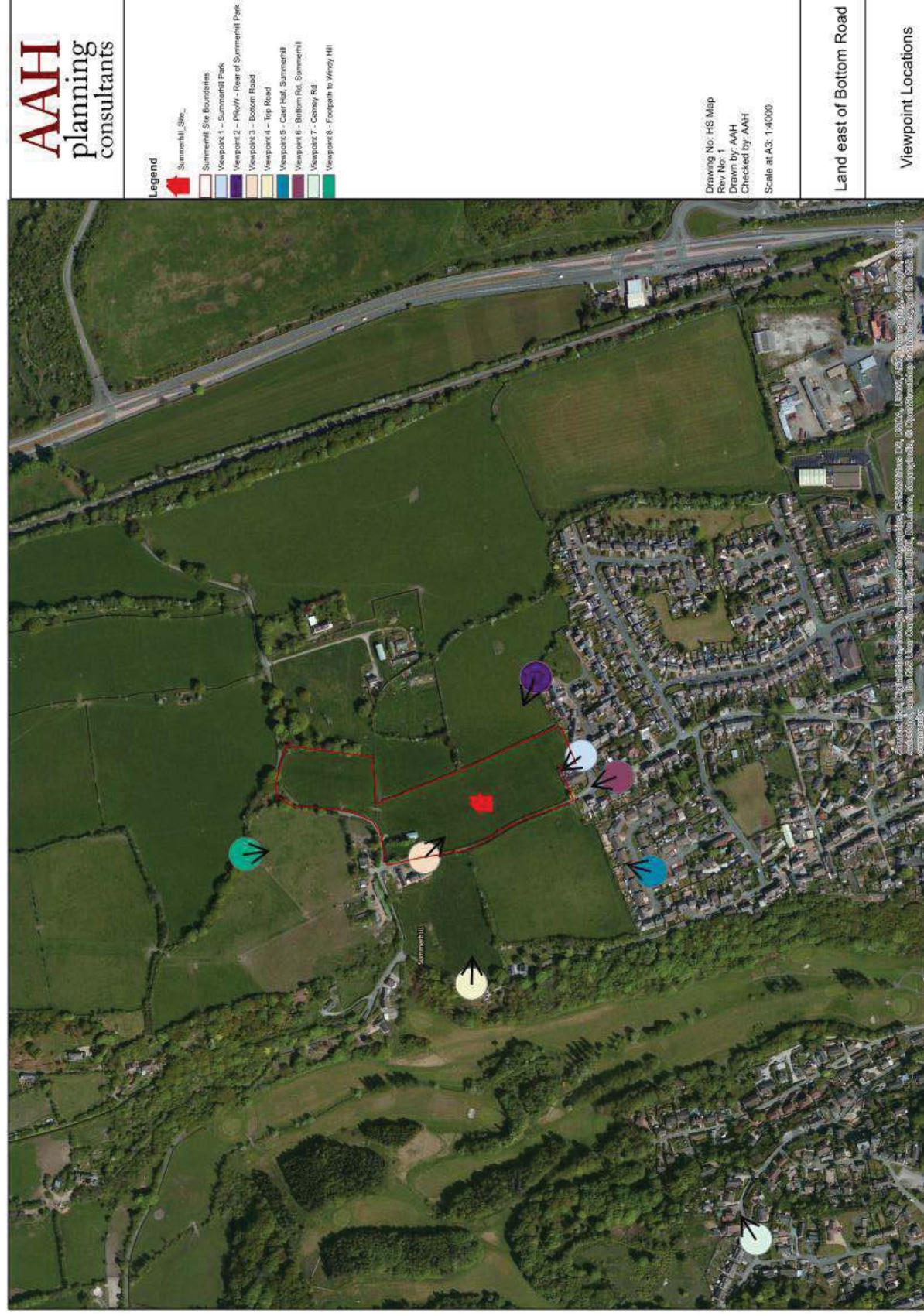
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APPENDIX B – PHOTOS OF APPLICATION SITE AND CONTEXT

Proposed Residential Development at Land Adjacent to Bottom Road, Summerhill



Greenacres, Summerhill Park

Old Hall Farm

Application Site



Viewpoint 1 – Summerhill Park X 331074, Y 354118

Application Site

Greenacres, Summerhill Park



Viewpoint 2 – Public footpath to the rear of Summerhill Park - X331171, Y 354174

Application Site

Application Site

Bottom Road

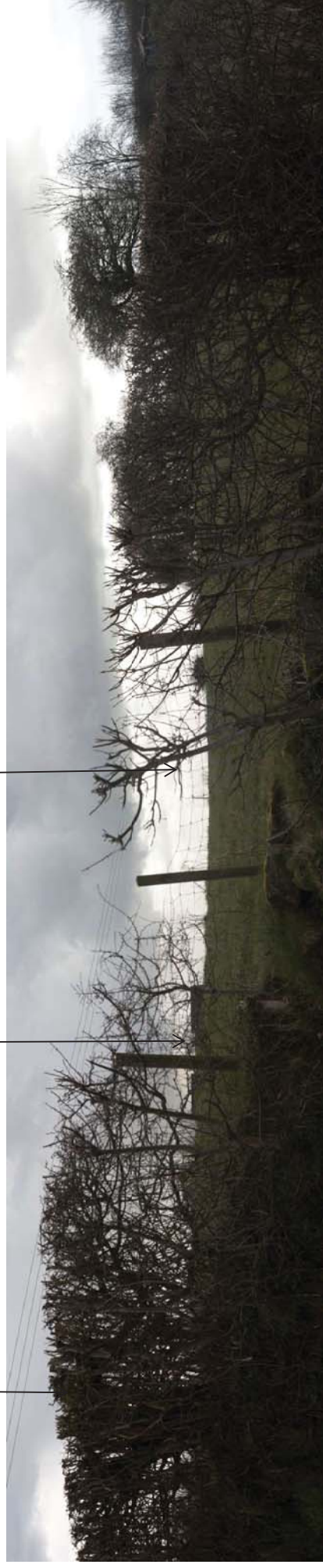


Viewpoint 3 – Bottom Road - X330948, Y354312

Hedge bordering Top Road

Properties on Bottom Road

Application Site



Viewpoint 4 – Top Road - X330792, Y354254

Properties on Caer Haf

Application Site to rear screened



Viewpoint 5 - Caer Haf, Summerhill - X330931, Y354032

Windy Hill

Application Site

Greenacres, Summerhill Park



Viewpoint 6 - Bottom Rd, Summerhill - X331048, Y354073

Properties on Cerney Road

Application site - screened from view

Caer Haf, Summerhill



Viewpoint 7 - Cerney Rd - X330476, Y353902

Summerhill Park

Caer Haf, Summerhill

Application Site



Viewpoint 8 – Footpath at Windy Hill - X330923, Y 354550

APPENDIX C – LANDSCAPE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TABLE

LANDSCAPE IMPACT ASSESSMENT TABLE

ASSESSING THE LANDSCAPE IMPACT ON THE WEST WREXHAM RIDGES AND VALLEYS CHARACTER AREA AND APPLICATION SITE

Landscape Feature	Existing Baseline Situation	Sensitivity	Analysis of the Effect on the Baseline	Magnitude of Effect	Significance of Effect
Geological	The Sydalit aspect area is a narrow NNW-SSE ridge of "Coal Measures" sandstone (Upper Carboniferous), parallel to that of the Moss area. Developed mainly in the south and rising to around 170m at Windy Hill in the North (and to the north west of the application site). It has been given a moderate sensitivity as there were no regionally significant sites/landforms present during the survey; as such the geology/geomorphology was considered to be typical of feature/process and is either widespread, better exposed elsewhere or not currently known to be exceptional.	Medium	The proposals would result in a direct impact on the underlying geology of the application site but not on the wider area beyond this either in terms of the broad Sydalit aspect area or the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area. The impact would be limited to the access roads and physical built form associated with the subsequent dwellings, and associated infrastructure. The full extent could be quantified at a future approval of reserved matters application; however, this is likely to involve some minor changes to the landform. Overall this would result in no permanent loss or alteration to the geological or geomorphological features of the landscape characteristics of the baseline, with only a very minor alteration proposed within the context of the broad Sydalit aspect area or the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area. The magnitude of impact and the significance of the effect of the proposed residential development proposal on the geological landscape are therefore negligible.	Negligible	Negligible

Landscape Habitats	The Talwrn Grassland aspect area has been given a high sensitivity as it is a mosaic of pasture, woodland and water which as outlined in the previous paragraph contains a variety of habitats, and many interesting species including the largest known breeding population of great crested newts at Stryt Las A"r Hafod. It also provides a buffer to the Ruabon Mountain SSSI.	High	The application would result in a major alteration to these key elements of the baseline associated with the application site itself; however, in the context of the wider Talwrn Grassland aspect area or indeed the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area the impact would be substantially less pronounced. There would be no direct or indirect impact on the key characteristics of the baseline that contribute to the high sensitivity of the landscape habitats, for example the important wetlands would be avoided with no direct or indirect effects occurring. V the magnitude of effect would be low with the scheme resulting in a minor alteration to one or more key elements (improved grassland and hedgerows) of the baseline. This scheme would still see an introduction of elements that may not be uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape; however, due to the application site's location bordering the housing to the south and being seen as an extension to the settlement. A moderate significance of effect would subsequently ensue.	Low	Moderate Adverse
Visual & Sensory	The A483 Mold Road Corridor aspect area comprises the hinterland low lying land around Wrexham town and its outlying urban villages, generally rural in nature but often with significant noise from A483, adjacent roads and the railway. The area is generally low lying open farmland with a large open field pattern with well-defined hedgerow	Medium	Overall whilst the proposed housing would inevitably change the visual and sensory experience along Bottom Road and to a lesser extent Top Road, beyond this the effects would quickly dissipate. From the Mold Road corridor there would be no more than a very minor alteration at worst and in reality the scheme would be unlikely to be appreciated due to the change in topography, railway line and associated planting that runs parallel with the line which all combines to restrict views to the west at this point. Subsequently whilst there would be some greater localised effects inevitably with a housing scheme of this scale within the context of the wider West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area the scheme would result in no more	Low	Minor/ Moderate Adverse

	boundaries. The original rural character has been significantly weakened by urban influences with some pockets of interest. The area is classified as rolling lowland farmland but is heavily influenced by the A483, Mold Road. Other roads and rail corridors subdivide the wider area, with pylons, views of housing & industry, mining & quarrying a frequent occurrence.		than a minor alteration to the baseline conditions which would result in a low magnitude of effect and subsequently a minor/moderate significance of effect.	
Historic Landscape	The Windy Hill aspect area consists of a swath of mixed, irregular, predominantly hedged fields occupying the Gwenfro and Moss valleys to the west and east of Brymbo and its former industrial areas. The area is characterised by isolated post medieval farmsteads and a wide variety of mines, collieries, brick and tile works and other industrial remains. It also contains the minor settlement of Berse Dreincourt and an isolated moated site at Lower Berse, and a small area of much	Medium	The land proposed for the residential development does not contain any ridge of furrow and has little heritage value of significance. The scheme would result in no direct impact on any feature of significant heritage value. Whilst the field system would alter at the application site through the introduction of housing, this would result in a major change to the baseline at a micro level; however, in the context of the overall West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub-area the scheme would result in no more than a very minor alteration to the heritage values associated with the landscape. The housing to the south which the scheme would appear linked to the most is of no heritage value and as such the scheme would be compatible with these houses. Overall, there would be no more than a very minor alteration to the historic values of the sub area which would result in a negligible magnitude of effect and a negligible significance of effect.	Negligible

	degraded parkland at Gwersyllt. The south of the area is crossed by Offa's Dyke and it is bounded on its north by the line of the Roman road from Caer Gai to Chester.				
Cultural Landscape	The Mynydd Rhiwabon Esclusham (lower slopes) aspect area is now devoted largely to sheep-rearing but which has historically been exploited for lead and coal. The lead-mining history of the area is interpreted at Minera. Less is known about coal-mining, ironworking or the agricultural past. This has been identified as primarily an agricultural area despite the presence of the museum at Minera. Lead-mining has been considered part of the (secondary) cultural essence of this landscape. It is therefore given a high value and sensitivity as an example of a landscape that is still seeing active farming use and which articulates the cultural meaning of former ways of wrestling a living from the environment.	High	The application site is located on the northern fringe of Summerhill, Gwersyllt where the characteristics are currently associated with the urban village but also agriculture with the site essentially acting as a transition between the two elements. The proposals for housing development in this location would cumulatively increase the urban village and erode the agricultural cultural values. There would be an opportunity in any design to ensure that the scheme is designed to draw from the cultural values of the settlement but this would be the subject of a detailed application involving the layout, appearance and planting. This would not be able to be assessed in an outline application seeking the principle of development only. Overall the impact on the West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area would result in no more than a very minor impact on the cultural values with a negligible magnitude of effect and negligible significance of effect ensuing.	Negligible	Negligible

Overall Landscape Character	West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys is the largest and most varied of four character areas in Wrexham which have a mixed rural and urban landscape. The other areas are Chirk, Rhosllannerchrugog - Rhostyllen, and Cefn Mawr. This is a complex area of former mining villages, industry, farmland and woodland in a landscape of distinct ridges and valleys which are aligned towards Wrexham town. Visually varied and complex, including lowland, valleys and hill and scarp areas. Characteristic undulating hill slopes with wooded valleys. Views towards Wrexham and the lowlands. Urban villages and Wrexham linked by roads crossing open lowland farmland area. Scattered groups of buildings in local Cefn sandstone and stone-built village cores, individuality in later additions but much standardised modern housing	Medium	The proposed development would result in a minor alteration to the visually varied and complex, including lowland, valleys and hill and scarp areas through the built form on this northern side of Summerhill. The characteristic undulating hill slopes with wooded valleys would be relatively unaffected with no direct impact and only indirect effects in the setting of Windy Hill to the north. The characteristic views towards Wrexham and the lowlands from Bottom Road and to a lesser extent Top Road would be affected but beyond this the effects would quickly dissipate. The characteristic roads linking the urban villages and Wrexham by crossing open lowland farmland area would be entirely unaffected by the housing due to its location at the edge of Summerhill off Bottom Road. Furthermore the scattered groups of buildings in local Cefn sandstone and stone-built village cores would be unaffected due to the location of development, instead the scheme would relate to the much more standardised modern housing development which is also characteristic of the area. In this respect the scheme would result in no more than a minor alteration to the overall West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area resulting in a low magnitude of effect and a minor/moderate adverse significance of effect. Whilst the overall impact of this residential development on the character of the application site can be considered to result in a loss or alteration to one or more key elements of the baseline such as the underlying grassland habitat and some loss of hedgerows but this would not necessarily be considered to be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape of the site and its setting as an expansion of the settlement to the north seen against the backdrop of the modern housing	Medium magnitude of effect on the application site but low on the wider West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area	Moderate Adverse Significance of Effect on the application site but Minor/Moderate Adverse Significance of Effect on the wider West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys sub area
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	development.		found within Summerhill Park.		
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APPENDIX D – VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT TABLE

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT TABLE

Viewpoint Location/Coordinates	Location and Distance	Sensitivity of Receptor	View Appraisal	Magnitude of Effect	Significance of Effect
Viewpoint 1 – Summerhill Park X 331074, Y 354118	Immediately south of the application site	High as residential properties	The view here is from the entrance of the public footpath from Summerhill Park and shows the existing grassland to the rear of these properties. Whilst the rear of the properties at ground floor are bordered by fencing limiting some views it is inevitable that there would be a major change in the appreciation of this view. The grassland would be lost to housing and its associated road layout and landscaping. Yet this would also be compatible with the existing housing in Summerhill Park and so would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue.	Medium	Moderate/Major Adverse
Viewpoint 2 – Public footpath to the rear of Summerhill Park - X331171, Y 354174	South-west of the application site	High as public footpath	This view allows open expansive views to the east due to the change in topography. Toward the application site, the land rises and is bordered by a hedgerow which would be retained in any scheme. The residential properties in Summerhill Park dominate the built form here. There would be an inevitable change in the perception of the view to the north-west; however, the main aspects of value are the wider panoramic views east. The proposals would appear compatible with the suburban housing in Summerhill. Although the hedgerow would be retained the housing would be clearly visible adjacent to those in Summerhill Park but because of this relationship it would not be substantially uncharacteristic	Medium	Moderate/Major Adverse

Viewpoint 3 – Bottom Road - X330948, Y354312	Immediately north-west of the application site	High as residential properties	when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Subsequently a medium magnitude of effect would ensue.	Medium	Moderate/Major Adverse
Viewpoint 4 – Top Road - X330792, Y354254	West of the application site	High as residential property	The properties here are orientated to front east. The nearest has a garage which projects at ground floor from the frontage restricting the angled views toward the site. The view would be altered more significantly from Bottom Road itself where the present appearance is of a transition zone between the countryside and the settlement. The existing built form in Summerhill Park is visible in the distance here and this would become much more pronounced as a result of this scheme, yet it would not be substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape with the surrounding built form. Subsequently, a medium magnitude of effect would ensue.	Low	Moderate Adverse
Viewpoint 5 - Caer Haf, Summerhill - X330931, Y354032	South-west of the application site	High as residential properties	This view is taken from Top Road which is a narrow highway enclosed by hedgerows which limit views toward the application site along much of the road. At this point a dwelling faces to the east in the general direction of the site and the two existing houses on Bottom Road are clearly visible here. The proposed development would be further east than these properties and slightly over the brow of the hill, meaning it would be unlikely that the development in its entirety would be visible. But there would be a minor change in the existing view characteristics with the upper portions of houses likely to be visible. A low magnitude of effect would subsequently ensue.	Low	Moderate Adverse

			through gaps though it doesn't lie immediately to the rear of the properties and is at an angle to the north-east. Here the change in topography means that the proposed properties would still be visible in these gaps though would result in only a minor change in the existing view characteristics with the upper portions of houses likely to be visible. A low magnitude of effect would subsequently ensue.		
Viewpoint 6 - Bottom Rd, Summerhill - X331048, Y354073	South of the application site	High as residential properties	This view is taken from Bottom Road immediately south of the mini roundabout. The existing view is dominated by the residential properties either side of the road and those entering into Summerhill Park. Here the application site is located to the rear and on a lower ground level where the views out do get intercepted by the built form in the foreground. The proposed development would be visible in gaps though which would result in a minor change in the existing view characteristics with the upper portions of houses likely to be visible. A low magnitude of effect would subsequently ensue.	Low	Moderate Adverse
Viewpoint 7 - Cerney Rd - X330476, Y353902	West of the application site	High as residential properties	This is an elevated viewpoint where the properties here are afforded glimpses of distance views. The views comprise of a mixture of mature trees, fields and the rooftops of housing and the housing in Summerhill can be seen from here. Due to the distance to the proposed development and its position on the east side of Bottom Road it would be unlikely that there would be views. But there could be glimpses in winter through trees, or of the very tops of roofs resulting in no more than a very minor change in the characteristics of this view and a negligible magnitude of effect.	Negligible	Negligible
Viewpoint 8 – Footpath at Windy Hill - X330828, Y	North of the application	High as footpath	This view is taken from a gap in the hedge along a footpath leading up Windy Hill. The footpath is mostly screened from view due to the hedge but the gap does allow an elevated	Low	Moderate Adverse

354628	site	open view looking south toward Summerhill. The application site is visible here and is seen in the foreground to Summerhill Park residential properties. The proposals would see a marked change in this with the settlement limits effectively closer to the viewer. But this would not in itself change how the wider panoramic and characteristics of the view would be appreciated with only a minor change overall. A low magnitude of effect would ensue.		
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Appendix E: GIS Maps

Legend

- Summerhill Site



Drawing No: HS Map

Rev No: 1

Drawn by: AAH

Checked by: AAH

Scale at A3: 1:10,000

Summerhill

OS MAP



Legend

- Summerhill Site

Cultural Landscape

<all other values>

CL40

Low

Moderate

High

Outstanding



Drawing No: HS Map

Rev No: 1

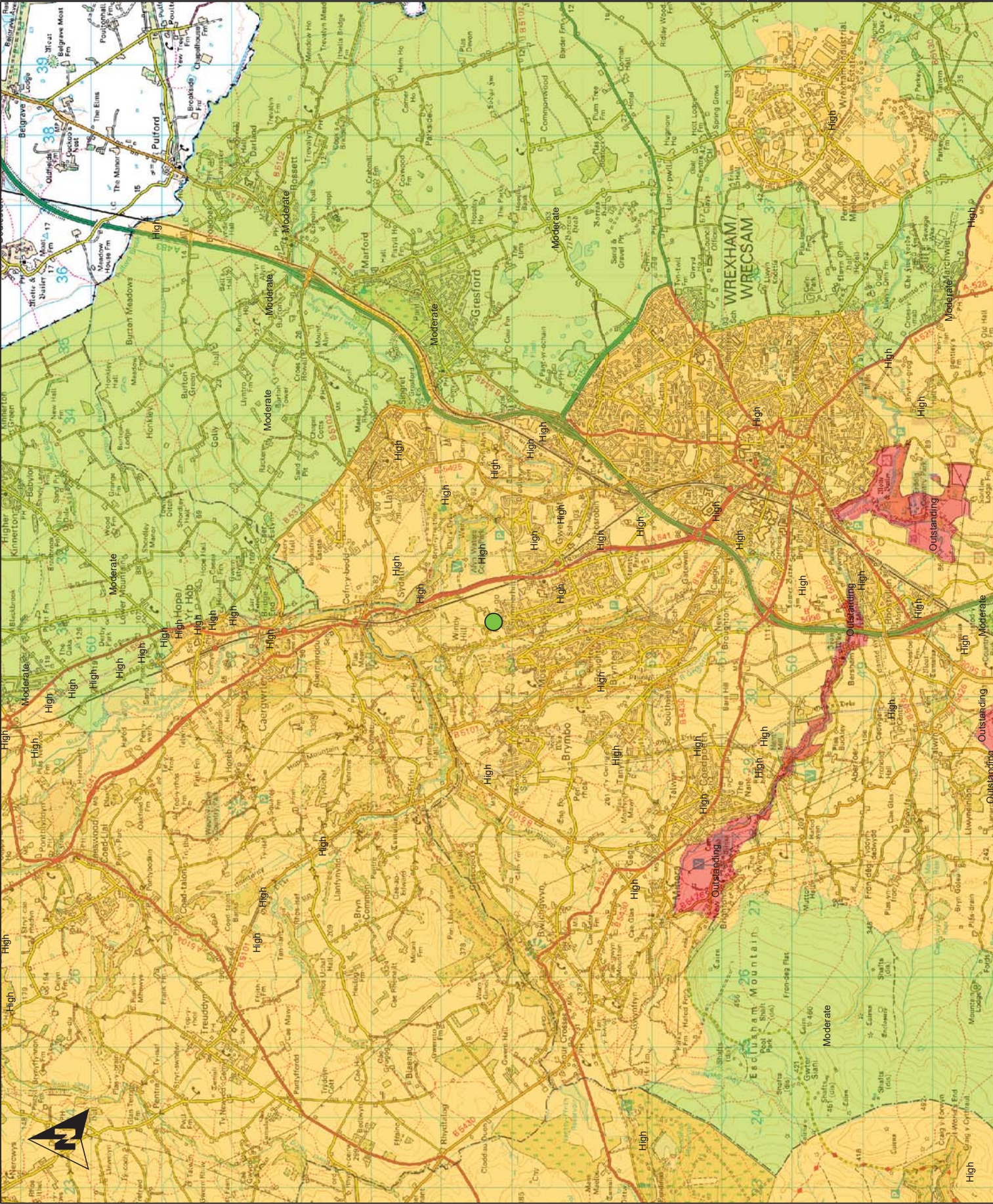
Drawn by: AAH

Checked by: AAH

Scale at A3: 1:50,000

Summerhill

LANDMAP



Legend

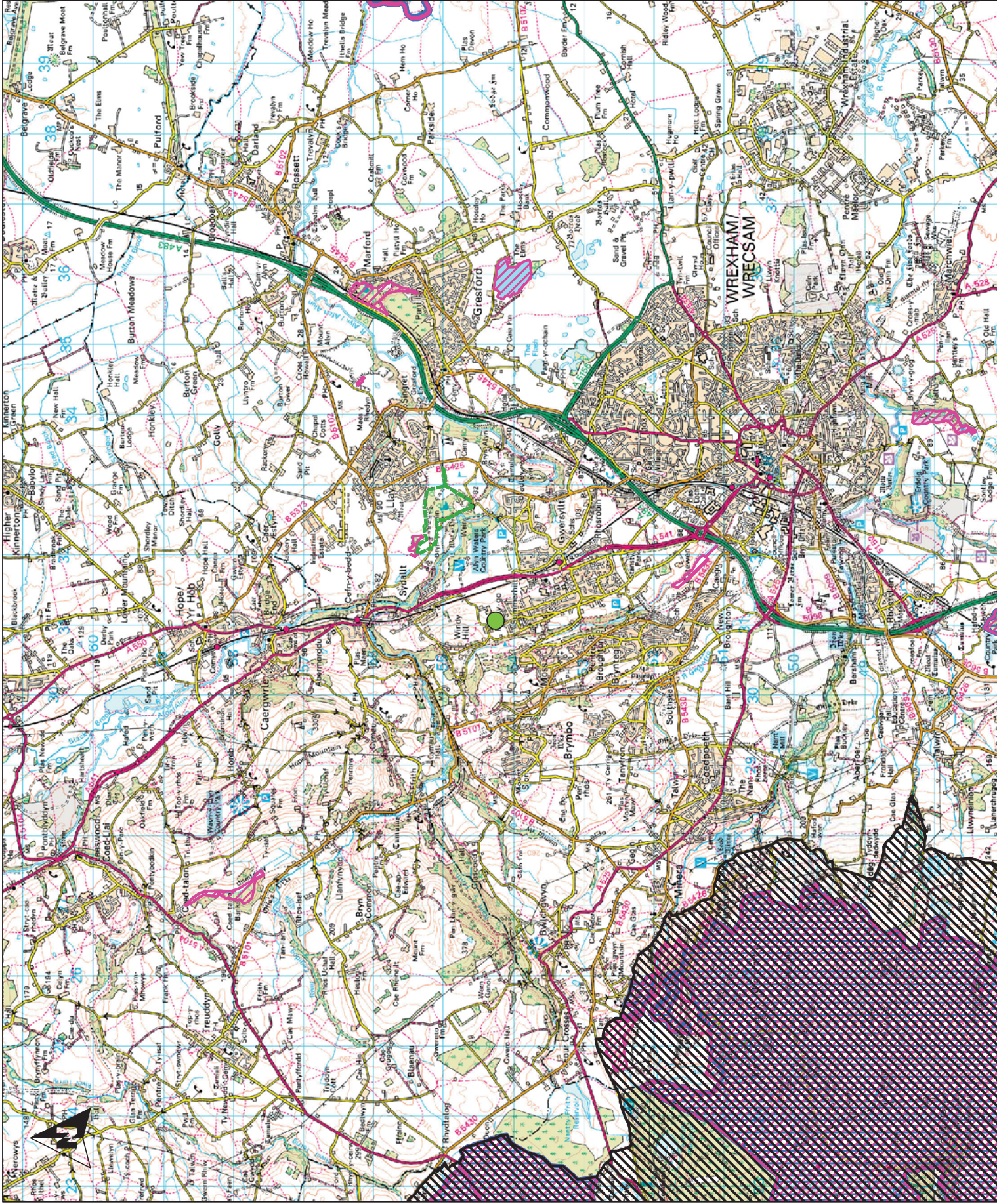
- Summerhill Site
- aonb
- LNR
- MNR
- NATIONAL-PARKS
- SPA
- SSSI
- Ramsar
- SAC
- NNR



Drawing No: HS Map
Rev No: 1
Drawn by: AAH
Checked by: AAH
Scale at A3: 1:50,000

Summerhill

Environmental Constraints



Legend



Summerhill Site

Geological Landscape

<all other values>

GL16

Low

Moderate

High

Outstanding



Drawing No: HS Map

Rev No: 1

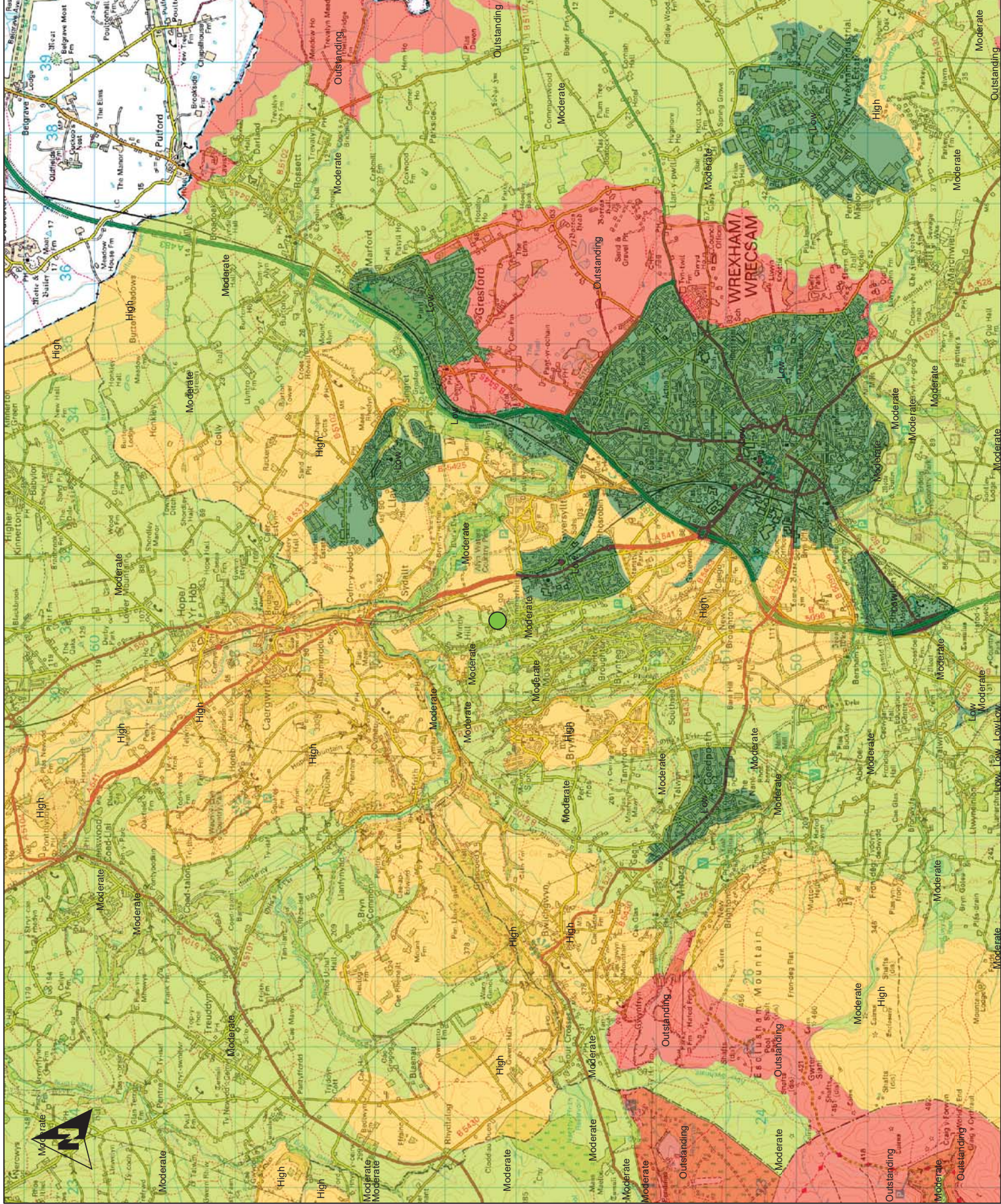
Drawn by: AAH

Checked by: AAH

Scale at A3: 1:50,000

Summerhill

LANDMAP



Legend

● Summerhill Site

Historic Landscape

<all other values>

HL23

Outstanding

Unassessed

Low

Moderate

High

Outstanding



Drawing No: HS Map

Rev No: 1

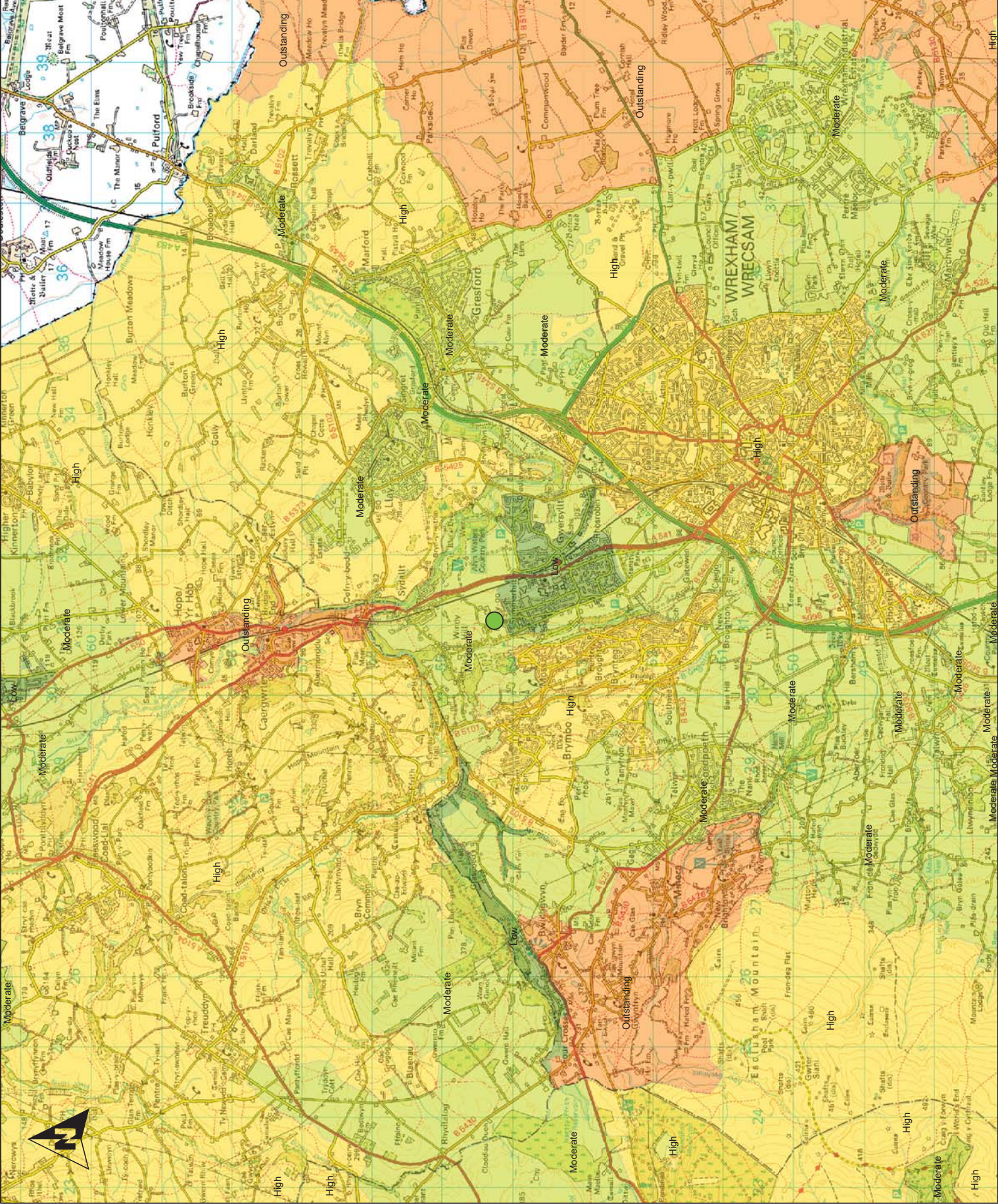
Drawn by: AAH

Checked by: AAH

Scale at A3: 1:50,000

Summerhill

LANDMAP



Legend

● Summerhill Site

Landscape Habitats

<all other values>

LH25

Low

Moderate

High

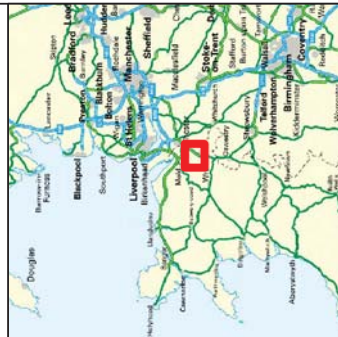
Outstanding

Low

Moderate

High

Outstanding



Drawing No: HS Map

Rev No: 1

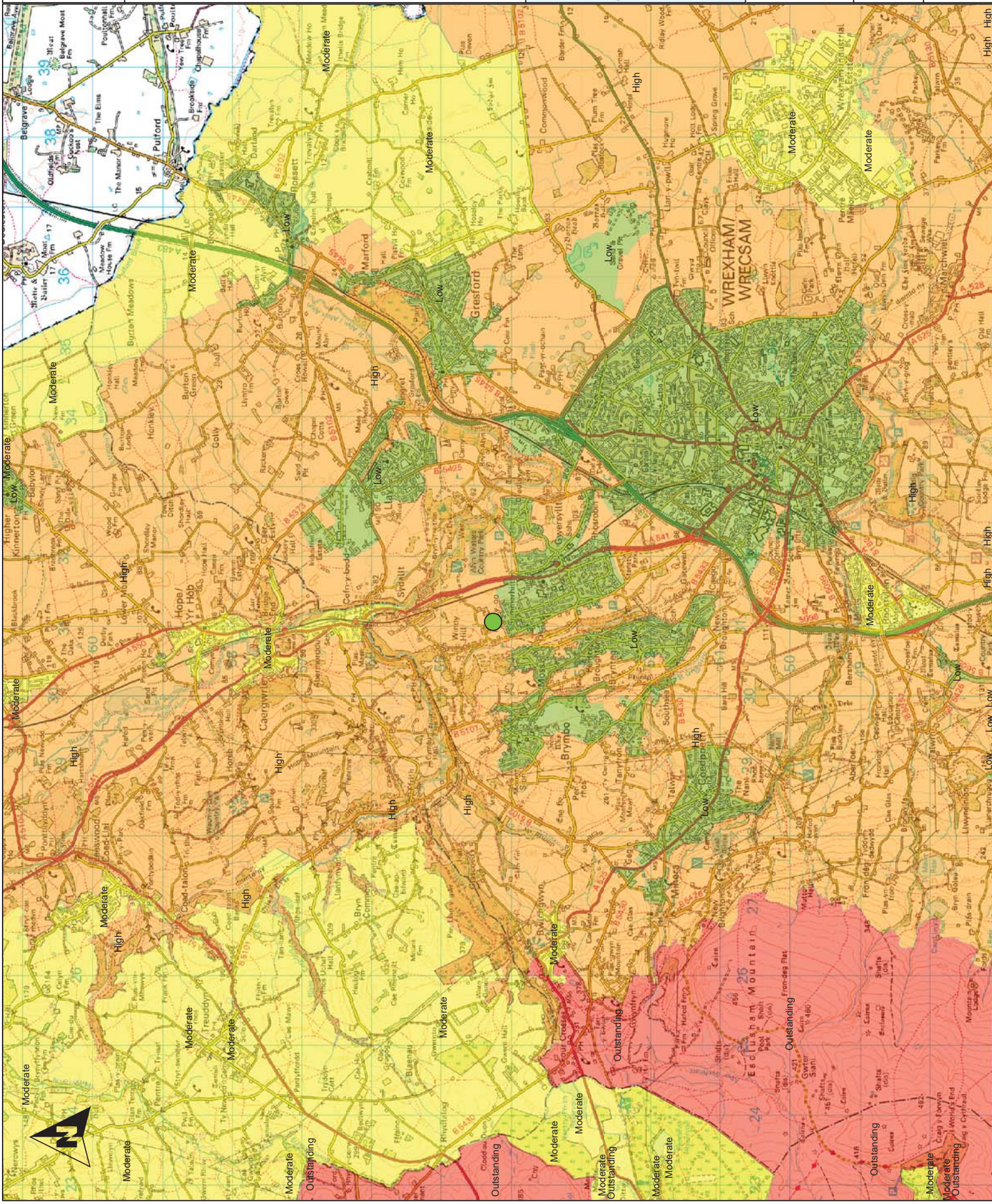
Drawn by: AAH

Checked by: AAH

Scale at A3: 1:50,000

Summerhill

LANDMAP



Legend

- Summerhill Site

Visual Sensory

<all other values>

VS26

Low

Moderate

High

Outstanding



Drawing No: HS Map

Rev No: 1

Drawn by: AAH

Checked by: AAH

Scale at A3: 1:50,000

Summerhill

LANDMAP

