



Gladman Developments Ltd.

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Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

June 2013

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared / Date	Approved/Date
-	Draft 1	EAF/January 2013	EAF/January 2013
A	Final	EAF/June 2013	EAF/June 2013

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd. on behalf of Gladman Developments Ltd. It comprises a Landscape and Visual Assessment (LVIA) of the proposed residential development and has been undertaken by Chartered Members of the Landscape Institute.
- 1.2 The site is located alongside Bangor Road (B5426) and Hafod Road adjacent to the settlement of Johnstown which lies south-west of Wrexham. The location of the proposed development site is shown at Figure 1. The proposal comprises of high quality housing development of up to 300 2 - 2.5 storey dwellings, approximately 465sqm of B2/B8 employment area, approximately 235sqm of retail area which would take the form of a local convenience store, associated public open space and Green Infrastructure. The site would be accessed from Bangor Road (B5426). The LVIA considers the potential effects of the proposed development upon:-
- Individual landscape features and elements;
 - Landscape character; and
 - Visual amenity and the people who view the landscape.
- 1.3 The main objectives of the LVIA are as follows:-
- To describe and evaluate the current landscape character of the site and its surroundings and to identify any notable landscape features within the site;
 - To determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed;
 - To identify and describe any changes arising from the project relating to landscape and visual issues. This is determined as the magnitude of change;
 - To identify and describe any mitigation measures that have been included;
 - To evaluate the significance of residual landscape and visual effects.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 At the time of preparing this LVIA the methodology has been based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition (GLVIA) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2002ⁱ, and Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (LCA) published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002ⁱⁱ. These documents do not provide a prescriptive approach to assessment but identify principles and good practice. The methodology for this assessment is described below and is based on this approach.
- 2.2 GLVIA3 was published on the 17th April 2013ⁱⁱⁱ. As explained by the Landscape Institute:-
- “GLVIA will replace the current edition (GLVIA2). In general terms the approach and methodologies in the new edition are the same. The main difference is that GLVIA3 places greater emphasis on professional judgement and less emphasis on a formulaic approach. An assessment started using GLVIA2 should be completed using that edition.”*
- 2.3 In summary, the GLVIA states:-

“The baseline information for the assessments, obtained through comprehensive desk and field studies, should include description, classification and analysis of the landscape and visual resource. The assessment process identifies likely landscape and visual effects, establishes their magnitude and the sensitivity of the receptor, and determines the significance of effects. Mitigation measures-designed to avoid, reduce, remedy or offset negative or adverse effects are identified, and their likely effectiveness also assessed.”

“Landscape impact assessment, in common with any assessment of environmental effects, includes a combination of objective and subjective judgements, and it is therefore important that a structured and consistent approach is used. It is necessary to differentiate between judgements that involve a degree of subjective opinion (as in the assessment of landscape value) from those that are normally more objective and quantifiable”.

2.4 In defining landscape and visual impacts, the guidelines state that:-

“Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked, procedures. The landscape baseline, its analysis and the assessment of landscape effects all contribute to the baseline for visual assessment studies. The assessment of the potential effect on the landscape is carried out as an effect on an environmental resource, i.e. the landscape. Visual effects are assessed as one of the interrelated effects on population.” (2.13)

“Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value ascribed to the landscape. The description and analysis of effects on a landscape resource relies on the adoption of certain basic principles about the positive (or beneficial) and negative (or adverse) effects of change in the landscape. Due to the inherently dynamic nature of the landscape, change arising from a development may not necessarily be significant.” (2.14)

“Visual effects relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people’s responses to the changes, and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity.” (2.15)

2.5 In addressing baseline studies, the GLVIA states at paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2:-

“The initial step in any landscape or visual impact assessment is to review the existing landscape and visual resource – that is, the baseline landscape and visual conditions. The data collected will form the basis from which the occurrence, estimation of magnitude and significance of the landscape and visual effects of the development may be identified and assessed.”

2.6 The purpose of baseline studies is to record and analyse the existing landscape features, characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the proposed development. This requires research, classification and analysis of the landscape and visual resources as outlined in the following paragraphs.

2.7 Research/survey involves both desk and field studies to assemble basic information. Classification entails sorting landscape into units or groups of distinct and recognisable type and character. Analysis involves the detailed examination of the constituent parts of the landscape and visual resources in order to understand how they are made up and experienced. It can also include the process of ascertaining the relative importance of the various aspects of the landscape and visual resource.

- 2.8 It is important that the visual area potentially affected by the project is as accurately defined as possible. Paragraph 6.24 of the guidelines suggests:-
- 2.9 *“The area of study for the visual assessment may extend to the whole of the area from which the development is visible (the visual envelope). In practice the extent of the area to be reported on may be limited by agreement with the regulatory authority on the distance from the proposed development within which the view is expected to be of interest or concern.”*
- 2.10 The extent to which the site is visible from the surrounding area is broadly determined in conjunction with the level or number of receptors (properties, public footpaths, roads etc.) with views to parts of the site, or the entire site.
- 2.11 The sensitivity of landscape character and visual resources depends upon the degree to which they can accommodate change. The following criteria have been assessed in determining landscape and visual sensitivity, as defined in the GLVIA:-
- *“Existing land use; context and setting of receptors;*
 - *Pattern and scale of the landscape; overall condition;*
 - *Visual enclosure/openness and importance of views;*
 - *Scope for mitigation, or enhancement;*
 - *Value placed on the landscape;*
 - *Activity and expectations of the receptor.”*
- 2.12 There is no standard methodology for the quantification of the magnitude of effects. However, it is generally based on the scale or degree of change to the landscape resource, the nature of the effect and its duration.
- 2.13 The magnitude of change and consequential significance of potential effects depends upon the scale, nature and quality of the development proposal, together with the sensitivity of the receptor. It is important to recognise that change can be either adverse or beneficial. The significance of the effect can then be assessed. The outcome will be influenced by the interaction of factors, and could range from major discordant changes affecting a highly sensitive resource to minor, barely discernible, alterations in a less sensitive context.
- 2.14 The GLVIA provide checklists for general guidance as follows:-

Landscape

“The loss of mature or diverse landscape elements, or features, is likely to be more significant than the loss of new or uniform / homogenous elements.

Effects on character areas, which are distinctive or representative, may be more important than the loss of areas in poor condition or degraded character which may, however, present greater opportunities for enhancement.

The loss of landscape elements, features or characteristics will be given greater weight if they are identified as being of high value or importance. Thus effects on landscape areas or characteristics recognised for their national importance are likely to be of more significance than effects on areas or characteristics of local importance. The test is whether the integrity of the landscape and objectives of designation are compromised or not.

The sensitivity of the landscape is dependent on both the attributes of the receiving environment and the characteristics and effects of the proposed development and can only be established by carrying out the assessment. However, landscapes with a high value and sensitivity to the type of change proposed are likely to be more seriously affected by development than those with a lower sensitivity.

The test of significance is not directly related to planning policy. However, this may be an important consideration where policies identify commonly held objectives and values."

Visual

"Large scale changes which introduce new, discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view.

Changes in views from recognised and important viewpoints or amenity routes are likely to be more significant than changes affecting other less important paths and routes.

Changes affecting large numbers of people are generally more significant than those affecting a relatively small group of users. However, in wilderness landscapes the sensitivity of the people who use these areas may be very high and this will be reflected in the significance of the change.

All stages of the project life-cycle should be addressed such as: site preparation; construction, operation, decommissioning and restoration."

Summary

- 2.14 Overall, the assessment of landscape and visual impact takes into account any design and mitigating measures included as an *integral* part of the development proposals. These measures avoid, reduce and, if possible, remedy any significant adverse effects. Mitigation is not solely concerned with 'damage limitation' but considers beneficial environmental improvements, such as landscape enhancement and recreation. Mitigation measures are generally more effective if they are designed as an integral part of an iterative design process.
- 2.15 The LVIA assesses both the long term effects relating to the operation of the proposed development and also the short-term effects associated with its construction.
- 2.16 Consideration has been given to seasonal variations in the visibility of the proposed development.

Threshold Criteria

- 2.17 A degree of flexibility is required depending upon the nature and context of a particular character area, but for this LVIA the following applies:-

Landscape Sensitivity

High: Landscape areas with particularly distinctive or very positive characters or with valued landscape/townscape features. The areas may be sensitive to relatively small changes. The landscape would be in good condition.

Medium: Landscape areas with reasonably positive character, but with some evidence of alteration or degradation of the character or features, potentially tolerant of some change.

Low: Landscape areas with a generally weak character or relatively few features of value, potentially tolerant of significant change. The landscape would be in poor condition.

2.18 For the Magnitude of Landscape Change the following criterion is used:-

High Adverse: Total loss of, or major alteration to, the key characteristics or features of the landscape/townscape area, such that after development the character or features would be fundamentally changed.

Medium Adverse: Potential loss of, or alteration to, the key characteristics or features of the landscape/townscape area, such that after development the character or features would be notably changed.

Low Adverse: Minor loss of, or alteration to, the key characteristics or features of the landscape/townscape area. After development the changes to character or features would be discernible but not fundamentally changed from the baseline.

No Discernible Change: Very minor alterations or loss to the landscape characteristics or features of the area, which would have an insignificant overall effect on landscape character and would be compensated by landscape improvements or enhancements.

Low Beneficial: Minor improvements to the key characteristics or features that outweigh any adverse landscape/townscape effects of the proposal, removal of minor incongruous features.

Medium Beneficial: Notable improvements to the key landscape characteristics or features, or improvements resulting from removal of inappropriate land uses or features.

High Beneficial: Major landscape improvements, through the creation of a new landscape structure, and/or the removal of large scale inappropriate or incongruous features.

Landscape Effects

2.19 Overall landscape effects are determined by correlating the sensitivity of the landscape resource with the magnitude of landscape change. Professional judgement is used to determine the overall significance of the effect based on these two elements. Overall significance is classified by **Substantial, Moderate, Slight** or **Negligible**, when there would be a very small effect, but that it is of very little importance, the effects can be either adverse or beneficial.

Visual Assessment

2.20 Flexibility is required when assessing the sensitivity of receptors depending upon their nature and their visual context. For this appraisal the following general criteria applies:-

Visual Sensitivity of Receptors

2.21 The sensitivity of visual receptors and views are dependent on:-

- The location and context of the viewpoints; and
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor.

2.22 In the evaluation of the effects on views and the visual amenity of the identified receptors, the magnitude or scale of visual change is described by reference to:-

- The scale of change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture;
- The duration and nature of the effect, whether temporary or permanent, intermittent or continuous, etc.;
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development; and
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

2.23 The following is used for visual sensitivity:-

High: Communities, and, or occupiers of residential properties with important views or viewpoints potentially affected or altered by the development.

High-Medium: Recognised routes (Rights of Way) where users have important viewpoints and valued views, potentially affected or altered by the development.

Medium: Occupiers of residential properties that may have secondary views, primarily from first floor level, potentially affected or altered by the development. Users of less important paths or routes i.e. footway users alongside highways where interest is generally focussed on the adjacent highway activity rather than the landscape. Rights of Way users where it is considered that viewpoint are of some value. Users of outdoor recreation and leisure facilities where the view is potentially less important than the activities e.g. users of sports pitches.

Low: People travelling through the landscape in cars, buses or on trains, or people at places of work where the view is less important than the surrounding activities, or with limited views potentially affected by the development.

2.24 For the Magnitude of Visual Change the following applies:-

High Adverse: Where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration, or significant change in the view, being a dominant and, or, an incongruous feature in the scene.

Medium Adverse: Where the scheme would cause a notable deterioration or change in the view or form a visible and, or, a recognisable incongruous new element readily noticed by a casual observer.

Low Adverse: Where the scheme would cause a minor deterioration in the view or a small incongruous element in the scene that could be missed by a casual observer.

No Discernible Change: Where the scheme overall would not form a notable deterioration or improvement in the view.

Low Beneficial: Where the scheme would cause a minor improvement in the view or a small improvement to the scene, or a small improvement to the scene that could be missed by a casual observer.

Medium Beneficial: Where the scheme would cause a notable improvement in the view or form a recognisable improvement or form a recognisable improvement that could be noticed by a casual observer.

High Beneficial: Where the scheme would cause a significant improvement and change in the view.

Visual Effect

- 2.25 Overall visual impact is determined by correlating the sensitivity of the receptor with the magnitude of visual change. Professional judgement is used to determine the overall significance based on these two elements.
- 2.26 Overall significance is classified as **Substantial, Moderate, Slight** or **Negligible**, when there would be a very small effect, but that it is of very little importance, the visual effects can be either adverse or beneficial.

Significance of Landscape and Visual Impact

		Magnitude of change		
		High	Medium	Low
Landscape/Visual Sensitivity	High	Substantial	Moderate	Slight
	Medium	Moderate	Moderate	Slight
	Low	Slight	Slight	Negligible

3.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

- 3.1 The planning policy framework has been considered in relation to landscape and visual matters. This section provides a summarised review with extracts of relevant issues that should be considered. The planning policy framework is provided principally by:-

- Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 5 (November 2012)
- Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Technical Advice Notes (TANS)
- Wrexham County Borough Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2005)

National Context

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 5 (November 2012)

- 3.2 PPW^{iv} sets out the Welsh Government's economic, social and environmental planning policy and is supported by a total of 21 Technical Advice Notes (TANS), those relevant to landscape are

briefly outlined below. The main theme of the Policy is a **presumption in favour of sustainable development**.

3.3 PPW sets out sustainability objectives which “reflect the vision for sustainable development” to which planning policies, decisions and proposals should adhere, these include:-

- *“Promote resource-efficient settlement patterns....especially through preference for the re-use of suitable previously developed land, wherever possible avoiding development on greenfield sites;*
- *Contribute to the protection and improvement of the environment, so as to improve the quality of life and protect local and global ecosystems. In particular, planning should seek to ensure that development does not produce irreversible harmful effects on the natural environment and support measure that allow the natural heritage to adapt to the effects of climate change. The conservation and enhancement of statutorily designated areas and of the countryside; the conservation of biodiversity, habitats and landscapes; and enhancement of the urban environment all need to be promoted;*
- *Promote access to employment, shopping, education, health, community, leisure and sports facilities and open and green space, maximising opportunities for community development and social welfare;*
- *Foster social inclusion by ensuring that full advantage is taken of the opportunities to secure a more accessible environment for everyone that the development of land provides;*
- *Contribute to the protection, and where possible, the improvements of people's health and well-being as a core component of sustainable development...”*

3.4 In respect of landscape, the relevant paragraphs of PPW are:-

4.11 Promoting Sustainability through Good Design

“Good design is essential to ensure that areas, particularly those where higher density development takes place, offer high environmental quality, including open and green spaces. Landscape considerations are an integral part of the design process and can make a positive contribution to environmental protection and improvement, for example to biodiversity...(4.11.8)

The visual appearance of proposed development, its scale and its relationship to its surroundings and context are material planning considerations. Local planning authorities should reject poor building and contextual designs. However, they should not attempt to impose a particular architectural taste or style arbitrarily and should avoid inhibiting opportunities for innovative design solutions. (4.11.9)

In areas recognized for their landscape, townscape or historic value, such as National Parks, Areas of outstanding Natural Beauty and conservation areas, and more widely in areas with an established and distinctive design character, it can be appropriate to seek to promote or reinforce traditional and local distinctiveness. In those areas the impact of development on the existing character, the scale and siting of new development, and the use of appropriate building materials (including where possible sustainably produced materials from local sources), will be particularly important. The impact of development on listed buildings should be given particular attention. (4.11.10)

Local planning authorities and developers should consider the issue of accessibility for all at an

early stage in the design process. (4.11.11)

5.1 Objectives

The Welsh Government's objectives for the conservation and improvement of the natural heritage are to:-

- *Promote the conservation of landscape and biodiversity, in particular the conservation of native wildlife and habitats;*
- *Ensure that action in Wales contributes to meeting international responsibilities and obligations for the natural environment;*
- *Ensure that statutorily designated sites are properly protected and managed;*
- *Safeguard protected species.(5.1.2)*

5.4 Development Plans and the Conservation and Improvement of the Natural Heritage

The development plan should:-

- *Identify all international, national and local designated sites;*
- *Provide criteria against which a development affecting the different types of designated site will be assessed, reflecting relative significance;*
- *Include locally-specific policies for the conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of landscape and amenity;*
- *Provide for the conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of biodiversity and landscape outside designated areas, in particular identifying opportunities to conserve important local habitats and species, and to safeguard and manage landscape features of major importance for nature conservation or amenity;*
- *Include, where appropriate, locally-specific policies for conserving native woodland and protecting and planting trees;*
- *Clarify how biodiversity will be safeguarded outside statutory designated sites without unduly restricting development that is otherwise appropriate;*
- *Provide for the protection and enhancement of open space of conservation value, seeking to identify opportunities to promote responsible public access for enjoyment and understanding of natural heritage where this is compatible with its conservation and existing land uses.(5.4.5")*

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 – Design (2009)

3.5 Technical Advice Note 12^v provides advice on the promotion of sustainability through good design, key objectives of which include:-

- Sustaining or enhancing local character;
- Promoting legible development;
- Promoting a successful relationship between public and private space;
- Promoting quality, choice and variety;
- Promoting innovative design;

- Ensuring attractive, safe public spaces;
- Security through natural surveillance;
- Enhancing biodiversity;
- Promoting sustainable means of travel.

Local Context

Wrexham County Borough Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2005)

- 3.6 Although the UDP^{vi} has now reached the end of its effective date, it is the most up-to-date statutory development plan for Wrexham County Borough and supersedes previous adopted development plans. It provides the main policy framework for Wrexham County Borough until the completion and adoption of the Local Development Plan (LDP), currently being prepared by the local authority, which will guide development within the area up to 2028 and will replace the UDP.
- 3.7 Policy relevant to the proposed development is outlined below, however it should be noted that the application site is not covered by any local or national designations and does not fall within the Green Barrier.
- 3.8 GDP1: General Development Principles “All new development should:-
- a. *Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality;*
 - b. *Take account of personal and community safety and security in the design and layout of development and public/private spaces;*
 - c. *Make the best use of design techniques, siting and orientation in order to conserve energy and water resources;*
 - d. *Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian and vehicular access to and from development sites, both on site and in the nearby locality;*
 - e. *Ensure that built development is located where it has convenient access to public transport facilities, and is well related to pedestrian and cycle routes wherever possible;*
 - h. *Safeguard sites and areas of nature conservation and wildlife interest, and to provide new habitats where there is an unavoidable loss of existing habitats and areas of wildlife interest;*
 - k. *Secure the development of sustainable communities, through the promotion of the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area.”*
- 3.9 EC4: Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland “Development proposals should provide for the conservation and management of hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland, wildlife and other natural landscape and water features, and include new planting in order to enhance the character of the landscape and townscape...”
- 3.10 Policy EC15: Small Scale Neglected Sites recognises the importance of supporting applications for reclamation sites stating that, “Action will be taken to protect and enhance general amenity through the reclamation and restoration of derelict sites, and through the improvement of untidy sites, dilapidated buildings, and other eyesores, particularly those in sensitive locations.”

- 3.11 Policy CLF6: Informal Recreation provides protection, improvement and maintenance for existing public footpaths as well as identifying and safeguarding potential new routes.
- 3.12 The application site lies adjacent to a Special Area for Conservation (SAC), also designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), for its Great Crested Newt population; refer to the Ecological Appraisal (fpcr, 2012) for further information. Part of the local Minerals Buffer Zone falls within the southern section of the site. There are no other designations within close proximity of the site application site.

Green Infrastructure Network Strategy

- 3.13 Green Infrastructure is currently not specifically referred to within Welsh Planning Policy. However, WCBC are in the process of preparing a Green Infrastructure Network Strategy which will provide guidance for improving the use of green spaces within urban areas as well as the urban fringe. Is it intended that this emerging document will become Supplementary Planning Guidance as part of the Local Development Plan for Wrexham County Borough and is likely to be available for consultation during 2013.

4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Context

Landscape Character

Wrexham LANDMAP SPG (Adopted March 2007)

- 4.1 Developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the Welsh Landscape Partnership Group, this resource is part of a wider study covering Wales from which landscape character areas have been identified and recommendations for their future made. The LANDMAP^{vii} study places the application site within Landscape Character Area 7c: 'Rhosllanerchrugog – Rhostyllen, Ruabon – Perycae' as shown at Figure 2. Key characteristics are:-
- *“Lower slopes of Ruabon Mountain consisting of undulating farmland, with residential and industrial development;*
 - *Bersham Colliery and tip, and the former Hafod tip, now restored, are landmarks;*
 - *Gentle carboniferous Coal Measure slopes (sandstone) mostly overlain by glacial till, although Rhosllanerchrugog centre is built on an outcrop;*
 - *A sandstone ridge, highest at Gardden Hill and followed to the north by Offa's Dyke (part now under Johnstown) runs through the centre of the character area;*
 - *To the east of Johnstown, Etruria Marl has been quarried to make the characteristic red bricks and tiles;*
 - *Most farmland is improved grassland of low biodiversity value;*
 - *Some former industrial sites are now of high wildlife value, including Stryt Las (great crested newts), the former Hafod tip (a young broadleaved woodland), and birch woodland north of Rhos;*

- *Fragmented areas of semi-natural vegetation include broadleaved scrub, neutral grassland, upland oak woodland along the Afon Eitha valley, beech woodland on Gardden Hill, neutral grassland at Legacy substation, lowland pasture, and oak/ash/sycamore woodlands around the Crematorium and Llwyneinion;*
- *Settlements are mainly of 19th-20th century origin but Penrycae and Ruabon have older centres;*
- *Coal mining remains are frequent but Bersham Colliery, with its coal spoil tip and remaining headgear is of particularly high value. Industrial sites are linked by a network of disused industrial railways;*
- *Border area – prehistoric military hillfort at Gardden and Offa's Dyke, marking a former political and military boundary;*
- *Rhostyllen, with modern industrial and commercial areas next to the A483, is now closely linked to Wrexham town;*
- *Johnstown, once linked with the brickworks and Hafod Colliery, is a mainly English-speaking community;*
- *Rhosllannerchrugog is a culturally rich community with strong Welsh culture and language;*
- *Surrounding farming is under pressure, with part time holdings and increase in 'horsiculture';*
- *Hafod y Bonc Country Park is a former tip now important for environmental education and recreation."*

4.2 Management guidelines for the character area include:-

- *"Promote urban forestry and enhance remaining areas of neglected or derelict land;*
- *Rationalise/reduce overhead power line clutter;*
- *Survey and assess use of sandstone and local brick in walls and buildings;*
- *Retain and improve environment for pedestrians and cyclists within settlements through the development of accessible natural green space and green network;*
- *Develop wildlife corridors as part of a green network, linking areas of fragmented habitats;*
- *Maintain ponds and protected great crested newts;*
- *Maintain, enhance and expand: scrub, broadleaved woodland, lowland pasture and hedges;*
- *Preserve character of lower Ruabon slopes e.g. field systems, industrial sites."*

4.3 The overall management strategy for the 'Rhosllanerchrugog – Rhostyllen, Ruabon – Penrycae' area is to promote, "**enhancement, conservation and sustainable development.**"

4.4 Given its generally derelict character, it is considered that the application site is of *low* sensitivity overall.

Site Context and Features

4.5 Approximately 3km south-west of Wrexham the site is located immediately east of the existing built development edge of Johnstown within Wrexham County Borough. The A483 lies to the east, providing direct and convenient access to Wrexham, Chester and the M56 further north, and the Shrewsbury to Chester Railway Line to the west. Bonc-yr-Hafod Country Park (previously

a landfill site) lies on higher ground immediately to the north and the current Hafod Landfill Site (disused clay pit) immediately to the south. Hafod Road represents the eastern site boundary and Bangor Road (B5426) the southern boundary. The proposed development site comprises of brownfield land where the former Hafod Tileries were located and is enclosed by broadleaved woodland along its southern edge and by hedgerow planting with some trees along its south-western edge. The application site is open along its northern and eastern boundaries save for intermittent native hedgerow planting and the existing workings within the north-eastern part of the site, accessed from Hafod Road. The building complex is concentrated within the north-eastern corner of the site on an area of hardstanding and comprises of several single and two storey red brick units abutting Hafod Road, the majority of which are linked. There is also a separate sizable building set back from the road abutting the northern edge of the site. A combination of grassland, bare ground and scrub dominates the central and southern parts of the site which is also bisected by high voltage power lines and the narrow Aberderfyn watercourse flanked by broadleaved woodland. The site is influenced by surrounding urban characteristics, most notably the settlement areas of Johnstown, Rhosllanerchrugog and Ponciau as well as the Vauxhall Industrial Estate which provide a distinctive urban edge to the west of the site, while the landfill site is dominant to the south. Semi-rural and agricultural influences also result from the open fields east of Hafod Road and the country park, although a man-made feature, further reinforces this.

- 4.6 A public right of way follows the outer western site boundary and connects to two further footpaths, one of which crosses the northern part of the site linking to Hafod Road, the other veers northwards through the adjacent fields towards the country park and railway line. Two further footpaths cross the south-eastern corner of the site. The footpath provides connectivity to the surrounding right of way network which is extensive in all directions; Wat's Dyke Long Distance Heritage Trail traverses the landscape in a north to south direction to the east.
- 4.7 Surrounding settlements include; Johnstown located approximately 0.4km to the west, Rhostyllen located approximately 2.3km to the north and Ruabon located approximately 1.2km to the south.
- 4.8 The site is not covered by any landscape quality designations identified within the Wrexham County Borough UDP. As described at section 3 above, there are few designations in the vicinity of the site, the nearest being Stryt Las A'r Hafod SSSI and Special Area of Conservation (designated Biodiversity Conservation within the UDP) to the north, west and south as illustrated at Figure 3.

Topography

- 4.9 The site sits within the broad valley of the River Dee at between 100m and 120m AOD and is relatively flat. The landscape rises locally to the north where the country park is situated and further west, continuing to rise towards the distinctive Ruabon Mountain which has a summit of approximately 475m AOD and Maesrychen Mountain and the Llantysilio Mountain Range beyond. Similar to the application site, Johnstown, Rhostyllen and Ruabon sit at a topographical level of between 100m and 140m, 80m and 120m and 100m and 120m AOD respectively. The topography of the site context is shown at Figure 4.

Study Area

- 4.10 The study area for the LVIA was selected after taking into consideration the specific characteristics of the landscape in and around the Johnstown area along with the scale of the proposed development. It was considered to be highly unlikely that there could be any significant effects on views beyond 1km from the site.

Visual Resource

- 4.11 This section of the assessment explores the visual effects arising from the proposed development during the operational phase. The assessment has been carried out by an understanding of the local topography and reference to selected photographic viewpoints to assess the likely significance of effects. Locations of the viewpoints are indicated at Figure 5, while the photographs are included at Figure 6. In terms of the visual analysis, the application site has been thoroughly covered, each viewpoint is summarised below.

Viewpoint 1 – View north-east from public footpath Ruabon 117 (close to junction with Bangor Road B5426)

- 4.12 This north-easterly view across the south-western corner of the site demonstrates how well contained it is both in terms of the boundary vegetation and the flat landform of the localised area. The overhead power lines are visible running across the site and pylons are prominent further east. The view is foreshortened by tree and scrub planting within the southern part of the site and no existing built development, residential or otherwise is apparent. The degree of natural screening from existing mature vegetation along the site's south-western edge is clear from this viewpoint. This could be reinforced as part of the Green Infrastructure proposals for the development to further strengthen its containment. Overall the extent of visibility is extremely limited from this location.
- 4.13 Whilst there is potential for the proposed development to be visible from this location, visibility would be extremely limited by existing and proposed planting both along the site's edge as well as intervening retained vegetation along Aberderfyn Brook and beyond and new vegetation proposed within the Great Crested Newt (GCN) Reserve in the foreground. The footpath would be retained within a green corridor bordering the site which would be reinforced and enhanced as part of the Green Infrastructure framework within which the built development would be set. Potential views of the built form are not likely to be more than glimpses of occasional building roofs above the vegetation. There would be a *low beneficial* magnitude of change overall.

Viewpoint 2 - View south-east from public footpath Esclusham Below 28

- 4.14 A view south-east across the application site which is foreshortened by internal hedgerow planting along with low level bunding to the east of the view. Overhead power lines and pylons are dominant components within the view which, again, is devoid of any existing built development. Overall the extent of visibility is extremely limited from this location.
- 4.15 The built development would largely be screened from this location; views would be across the proposed GCN Reserve. Activity along a short section of the main access road would be visible, however this would be extremely intermittent given the level of existing and proposed landscape

planting throughout the reserve area as well as along the access road itself, views would also be of a transient nature. The magnitude of change is considered to be *low beneficial*.

Viewpoint 3 – View north-east from public footpath Esclusham Below 28

- 4.16 A north-easterly view, representative of the right of way crossing the northern part of the site, towards the factory buildings, the majority of which are disused though a few remain operational, and Hafod Country Park further north. The landscape is predominantly flat, though rises sharply at the perimeter of the country park (former landfill site) and is dominated by the largely defunct built commercial development which is separated from most of the remaining site area by c.2m high barbed wire fencing. An electricity pylon is prominent to the north of the view. Overall the extent of visibility is extremely limited from this location.
- 4.17 The proposed development would inevitably be visible from this footpath which would be retained. Development would be set back from the footpath and its appearance would be softened by new tree planting as well as garden planting within private frontages. Overall, it is considered that there would be a *medium beneficial* magnitude of change in local views from this receptor.

Viewpoint 4 - View east from public footpath Esclusham Below 24

- 4.18 An easterly view through a gap in the hedgerow bordering the public footpath towards the application site. Visibility is limited, by the mature vegetation framing the view, to the large operational building within the northern part of the site. Due to the flat nature of the topography, visibility does not extend further east and again, the general extent of visibility is extremely restricted from this location.
- 4.19 Potential visibility of the proposed development would be restricted by a 10 metre wide belt of native structure planting proposed along the north-western boundary to further screen and contain that part of the site as well as reinforcing the existing hedgerow and strengthening the overall GI framework. Due to the close proximity of this receptor it is unlikely that there would be any views of the built development above the proposed vegetation once it is established. There is potential for the development to be glimpsed through the planting, however this would be dependent upon the detailed planting design and species mix and would not afford significant visibility in any event. Views from the footpath would be infrequent, generally occurring only where there are gaps in the hedgerow and would be transient. Overall the magnitude of change is considered to be *low beneficial*.

Viewpoint 5 - View south from Hafod Country Park

- 4.20 An elevated southerly view across the application site extending towards the wider landscape rising further south and west. Hafod Landfill site and Hafod House are clearly visible adjacent to the site's southern and eastern edges, while the settlement of Johnstown is visible on higher ground to the west. The A483 is also visible within the view, further east of the site.
- 4.21 The proposed development would be visible in the context of the existing Johnstown settlement. Proposed landscape planting would assist in breaking up the roofscape and softening the overall appearance of the built form. Whilst still relatively young, the existing plantation within the country park provides a degree of visual screening, this would increase as the planting continues to

mature thus reducing the visible amount of new development. The local store, employment buildings and associated car parking would be heavily filtered by existing retained vegetation and new planting within the proposed open space. The magnitude of change is considered to be *low/medium beneficial* overall.

Viewpoint 6 – View west from public footpath Esclusham Below 31

- 4.22 A close range westerly view from the right of way adjoining Hafod Lane. This viewpoint is representative of both the footpath and Hafod House adjacent to it. Visibility of the application site is limited to the existing disused factory buildings aligning its north-eastern edge, adjacent to Hafod Road. Hafod Country Park is visible further north of the site, set beyond the existing built development.
- 4.23 There would be close range views of the proposed development from the right of way, and potential views from Hafod House, although these are likely to be limited to first floor level only and would be extremely infrequent in any event given that the house is set within mature planting relatively well back from the roadside. Whilst views would include close range visibility of the built form, the block layout creates a varied depth of view, allowing more distant views between development blocks and into the site. The appearance of the built form would be softened by tree planting along Hafod Road and internal roads as well as planting within private gardens. It is considered that there would be a *medium beneficial* magnitude of change to the existing view.

Viewpoint 7 – View south-west from Hafod Road

- 4.24 A south-westerly view along Hafod Road bordering the eastern edge of the application site. The existing factory buildings, both disused and operational, along with the flat nature of the localised area prevent views further into the site limiting visibility to the north-eastern corner. Hafod House is evident to the east of Hafod Road.
- 4.25 The proposed housing would be visible beyond the belt of structure planting proposed as part of the Green Infrastructure along the northern edge of the site, although this would largely limit visibility to the upper sections and rooflines of buildings in any event. Views of the housing along Hafod Road would be oblique and filtered by new tree planting along the road. Tree planting along internal roads throughout the residential development would punctuate the roofscape, further helping to soften and filter potential visibility. Views would be infrequent and transient and the magnitude of change is considered to be *medium beneficial* overall.

Viewpoint 8 – View west from Hafod Road

- 4.26 A westerly view across the south-eastern part of the application site and Hafod Road, framed by mature vegetation. Visibility is largely confined by the intermittent vegetation within the site, although the residential fringe of Johnstown is apparent on higher ground set against the distant mountain ranges. Pylons and overhead power lines crossing the application site are dominant and detract from the view while the redundant factory buildings are partly visible at the eastern site boundary beyond which Hafod Country Park can be seen in the distance.
- 4.27 Although the proposed built development would be visible, it would be set within the extensive GI framework incorporating well-designed areas of open space and retained features, such as the Aberderfyn corridor which would screen the proposed built development (local store and

employment) within the southern part of the site. Furthermore, the natural open space in the foreground would maintain a degree of separation from the built development at this location. Similar to viewpoint 7, views would be infrequent and transient and the magnitude of change is considered to be *slight beneficial* overall.

Viewpoint 9 – View east from junction of South Lane/Johnson Street, Ponciau

- 4.28 An extensive elevated easterly view across the settlement areas of Ponciau and Johnstown towards the application site, which is visible in the middle distance. Hafod Country Park lies prominently to the north of the site against higher ground lying some distance to the east. Existing residential housing in the foreground forms the most visually dominant part of the view.
- 4.29 The proposed development would be distantly visible from this location within the existing residential area of Ponciau, it would however be a small component within the view seen very much in the context of the existing wider settlement area and would therefore not be out of character with its surrounding context. Furthermore, the GI proposed as part of the development would soften and break up the appearance of the built form. The magnitude of change is considered to be *low adverse*.

Viewpoint 10 – View east from Glasfryn (public footpath Rhos 27), Johnstown

- 4.30 A close range easterly view, representative of the residential edge of Johnstown, towards the application site which is screened by mature vegetation aligning the railway line. Hafod Country Park is visible beyond existing residential properties and high voltage electricity pylons form dominant visual detractors. There is potential for first floor level views of the site from some of the properties, although such views are likely to be obscured by the mature vegetation along the railway corridor.
- 4.31 There would be no visibility from ground level and therefore no discernible change to local views from the public right of way or from local access roads. Whilst there is potential for limited first floor visibility of the proposed development above existing mature vegetation, views would be extremely restricted and would not be close range due to the intervening vegetation associated with the railway corridor, as well as that bordering and within the site which would be enhanced and reinforced as part of the GI proposals. Any views would be confined to the uppermost parts and rooflines of the built form and would be limited to relatively few properties. Where the development would be visible it is considered that the magnitude of change would be *low beneficial* in overall terms.

5.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 5.1 Design and mitigation measures are integral approaches that have been adopted as part of the iterative design process. This process has considered the optimum location of development within the site, together with matters of access and drainage while also addressing landscape features on site and the provision of a Green Infrastructure framework.
- 5.2 The development proposals, shown on the masterplan that accompanies the application, have been carefully developed to address the landscape and visual issues that have been identified by the baseline analysis.

- 5.3 The proposed development comprises of up to 300 new dwellings. The new housing would be 2 - 2.5 storeys high set within a robust Green Infrastructure framework comprising of new public open space and green links incorporating wildlife habitats and wetland areas (SuDS) as well as a specifically designed Great Crested Newt Reserve. The GI would provide new areas of structural woodland planting, integrating retained trees and hedgerows. Access to the development would be from the south via Bangor Road (B5426). Links are proposed to public footpaths Ruabon 117, 118 and Esclusham Below 24, 28, 29 which provides connectivity to the wider footpath network.
- 5.4 Further information on the design principles to include amount, use, scale, access, appearance and landscape is contained within the Design and Access Statement also prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd., which accompanies the application.

Potential Effects

Construction Phase

- 5.5 During the construction phase there would be temporary visual impacts. These would arise from localised construction work necessary to build the housing development along with associated infrastructure and other external works. Such impacts would be for a short duration only.

Operational Phase

- 5.6 During the operational phase, the development itself is likely to result in effects upon the local landscape and visual amenity.

Green Infrastructure Principles/Mitigation

- 5.7 Should no mitigation measures be incorporated into the proposals, the proposed development could potentially result in increased adverse visual effects upon existing residential areas within the western part of Johnstown, closest to the application site along Gwalia, Worsley Avenue and Linley Avenue, as well as those on higher ground and Hafod House to the east. Users of public footpaths Ruabon 117, 118 and Esclusham Below 28, 29 which cross or follow the site boundaries, and the local road network including Hafod Road and Bangor Road could also experience adverse visual effects as could users of the more distant rights of way and country park, albeit any such effects would be extremely distant, infrequent and transient.
- 5.8 Landscape guidelines for the local landscape character area which encompasses the site include, *"maintain, enhance and expand: broadleaved woodland and hedges"*. The development proposals would conserve the majority of the site's broadleaved woodland, hedges and trees. These features would be reinforced by the introduction of new tree and hedgerow planting needed to reduce the visual impact of the built development and the access roads. This framework of Green Infrastructure (GI) would assist in further assimilating the new development into its landscape context whilst mitigating potential adverse effects upon local views. The development would therefore be set within a strong GI which draws upon and enhances the existing framework to maximise recreational and wildlife value.
- 5.9 The GI would be designed and managed to encourage biodiversity, landscape and sustainability benefits and would include a mix of connected habitats that, in turn, connect with existing hedgerows and trees both within the site as well as the wider landscape. It would include new species rich hedgerows, wetland habitats, individual tree planting and varied grassland habitats. Overall, the proposals would provide a considerable net gain in natural habitats which, through

an increase in tree cover as well as delivering a range of biodiversity benefits would enrich both the landscape and the natural environment of the site overtime, as the new planting matures.

5.10 Proposals for the landscape include the following:-

- Structure planting along the northern and north-western edges of the site to reinforce and connect the existing sections of hedgerow and broadleaved woodland planting, as well as along the south-eastern edge to provide further containment of the proposed development and connect existing woodland belts both on and adjacent to the site. This would include a high proportion of feathered whips and standards to provide some immediate effect;
- Reinforcement planting of the existing hedgerow which runs adjacent to footpath Ruabon 117 along the south-western boundary of the site (viewpoint 1). This mature hedgerow would provide an effective visual buffer of the proposed development, and would therefore benefit from infill planting and reinforcement as necessary;
- An extensive area of public open space within the south-east of the site and along the southern edge of the built development to cater for informal and passive recreation as well as outdoor play space, both formal equipped children's play and informal play. These areas would encompass new footways and cycleways as well as retained footpaths, areas of broadleaved woodland, tree and hedgerow planting;
- A specifically designed reserve area for the Great Crested Newt population comprising of areas of open water and terrestrial habitats, grassland and scrub. The reserve would cover one third of the total site area within the western part of the site, either side of the brook, affording a strong connection to the existing pond network immediately adjacent to the north-western site boundary and south of Bangor Road. Refer to GCN Mitigation Strategy (fpcr, 2013) for further information;
- Wetland habitats would incorporate attenuation ponds and swales with marginal and aquatic planting encompassed within marshy grassland. These would be set within both the public open space and the GCN Reserve;
- Green corridors and links through the development area, including the incorporation of existing public footpath Esclusham Below 28 through the residential development, to provide connectivity between boundaries within the site itself and with the wider landscape;
- Tree planting along the internal road layout and on plot landscaping to help integrate the built development into its surroundings whilst helping to mitigate potential adverse effects upon local views; and
- Vegetation lost in order to facilitate the new site access would be compensated for by new structural landscaping and tree planting adjacent to the roundabout and along Bangor Road, to create a strong and attractive green entrance to the development, as well as within the GI proposals as outlined above.

5.11 With regard to the built form, a palette of muted colours is considered to be most suitable. Darker hues to the roofs are likely to be beneficial in visual terms, particularly where the development would be distantly visible.

5.12 There would not be any adverse visual effect upon local designations and there would be no significant landscape or visual effects upon the Stryt Las A'r Hafod SSSI and Special Area of Conservation by the proposed housing development and associated infrastructure. Overall, the

proposed development would have a relatively limited Zone of Visual Influence which is further described at section 6.0: Assessment of Effects below.

- 5.13 Proposed mitigation measures should accord with the Wrexham County Borough UDP and the emerging GI Network Strategy as described in section 2.0: Planning Context above. Additionally, the open space element of the GI should accord with Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16 – Sport, Recreation and Open Space (2009)^{viii}, Wrexham Guidance Note No. 10 – Public Open Space in New Housing Development (2008)^{ix} and Wrexham Play Strategy 2009 to 2013^x.

6.0 ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTS

Landscape Effects

Landscape Effects – Construction

- 6.1 The site is brownfield land and although it would generate a degree of demolition effects upon the landscape and visual resource, these are not considered to be significantly adverse and would be localised in any event. Demolition of the existing buildings and remaining areas of hardstanding is likely to be completed within a relatively short timeframe followed by the construction period for the development.
- 6.2 All construction works would be carried out in full accordance with best practice procedures to minimise and protect potentially adverse impacts upon the local landscape character.
- 6.3 Anticipated effects during the development phase would primarily be caused by:-
- Clearance and set up of compound area;
 - Demolition of existing buildings and hardstanding;
 - New roundabout at Bangor Road (B5426) to facilitate the site access;
 - New highway works;
 - Building works; and
 - Construction traffic, including HGVs and staff cars travelling to and from site.
- 6.4 It is envisaged that any cut material arising from the construction phase of the development would be utilised in areas of landscaping as far as practicable.
- 6.5 The landscape impact during the demolition and construction phase is assessed as being of a transient nature and, given that the timescales involved would be relatively short, this is considered to be of limited significance overall. Inevitably there would be some disruption to the site landscape and its immediate environs during this phase of works. However, it would be limited in extent resulting in a *slight* adverse landscape effect.
- 6.6 The majority of existing vegetation would be retained with the exception of a relatively short section along Bangor Road to facilitate the new vehicular access. This loss would be more than compensated for by the provision of a comprehensive framework of GI as described at section 5.0: Development Proposals above.

Landscape Effects – Operation (full development in place)

- 6.7 The baseline landscape analysis concluded that the proposed development would be located on a predominantly brownfield site within a landscape which has few particularly sensitive elements and is not recognised by any highly sensitive national designation such as 'National Park' or 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' nor does it lie within Green Belt land. Resultant direct effects on the landscape fabric would therefore be *negligible/slight* at most. Effects upon the landscape character are considered below.
- 6.8 The development would be located within the local Landscape Character Area 7c: '*Rhosllanerchrugog – Rhostyllen, Ruabon – Perycae*' as identified in the Wrexham LANDMAP SPG, 2007. Although the local landscape is heavily influenced by the surrounding industrial heritage, the urban fringe of Johnstown and Rhosllanerchrugog and the busy A438 corridor, it also takes on a semi-rural nature, being influenced by adjacent open farmland and local winding lanes. This generally flat landscape comprises of farmland and improved grassland with areas of broadleaved woodland and scrub and disused factory buildings. Settlement areas are concentrated and there are a small number of individual properties. Fields tend to be bound by a combination of hedgerows and timber post and wire fencing. A strong urban fringe to the west, is afforded by the settlement pattern. The application site is considered to be low in sensitivity due to its proximity to increased urban pressures including the railway line, the A483 and Hafod Landfill Site (former clay quarry) as well as the relatively densely populated residential areas of Johnstown, Rhosllanerchrugog and Ponciau. Consequently, analysis of the local landscape character suggests that the area is considered to be of *low* landscape sensitivity to the residential development proposal. This is because of the predominantly residential local character with urban and some semi-rural influences.
- 6.9 The site is of limited landscape value with few intrinsic features of interest, the majority of existing mature trees and hedgerows within and bordering the site would be retained as part of the overall network of Green Infrastructure as described above. It is a landscape that would benefit tremendously from re-development and has potential to accommodate the type of change proposed.
- 6.10 The proposed mixed use development would have an effect upon the '*Rhosllanerchrugog – Rhostyllen, Ruabon – Perycae*' Landscape Character Area. Effects would be restricted to approximately 0.8km to the north and 0.5km to the west. Localised screening is afforded by the residential fringe of Johnstown, Hafod Country Park and Hafod Landfill Site on higher ground, limiting views from the west, north and south as well as the flatter lower lying landform combined with field boundary and roadside hedgerows which restricts visibility from the east. There would be no effect upon the adjoining '*Welsh Maelor*' Landscape Character Area further east of the A483. Where the development would be more distantly visible it would be within the context of the existing settlement of Johnstown. Although the housing would be a new element within the localised landscape it would not be out of character with the existing urban fringe setting. Furthermore, the application site has been previously developed for industrial use and is now largely derelict encompassing many disused factory buildings, it is therefore considered that the proposed development would result in an improvement to the landscape fabric and there would be no increased adverse effects, the proposal would result in a *slight* improvement within the local views overall.

- 6.11 The proposed residential development would have a *low/medium beneficial* magnitude of change upon the local landscape fabric, which is considered to be of *low* sensitivity, resulting in a *negligible/slight* landscape effect overall.

Visual Effects

- 6.12 As part of the baseline assessment of the study area, a representative Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) has been prepared. The ZVI (Figure 5) does not indicate the extent of visual impact but illustrates the potential area in which there are full, partial or minimal views of the development. The ZVI is a useful tool in which to correlate the availability of views, the type and sensitivity of views, and consequently the potential visual effects.
- 6.13 Within the ZVI, some landscape and physical features such as trees, hedgerows and buildings provide screening effects which curtail the extent of visibility. Additional distant views may potentially occur from outside the ZVI, however these are assessed as being of negligible significance due to distance and intervening features that provide screening effects.
- 6.14 This section of the assessment explores the visual effects arising from the proposed development during the operational phase. The assessment has been carried out by an understanding of the local topography and reference to selected photographic viewpoints to assess the likely significance of effects. Locations of the viewpoints are also indicated at Figure 5, while the photographs are included at Figure 6. In terms of the visual analysis, the application site has been well covered and includes a viewpoint from Bonc-yr-Hafod Country Park and the residential area of Ponciau. Each viewpoint is summarised below.

Visual Effects – Construction

- 6.15 All construction works would be carried out in full accordance with best practice procedures to protect and minimise potential adverse impacts upon the visual resource. The baseline visual analysis concluded that the availability of open views into the application site are limited and broadly identified as being close to mid-range views from few sensitive receptors at specific points close to the site's perimeter. Localised topography, tree and hedgerow cover restrict visibility of the site from the majority of the wider landscape.
- 6.16 The effects on visual amenity would vary depending on distance from the proposed development, aspect of existing properties and the degree of natural screening provided by the topography and vegetation.
- 6.17 The construction phase would be relatively short term and its impact upon visual amenity is considered to be of limited significance and would not be substantially adverse upon the visual resource and receptors. Effects would largely be restricted to the application site and its immediate environs and would be *slight/moderate* overall. The effects on visual amenity would vary depending on distance from the proposed development, aspect of properties and the degree of natural screening provided by the topography and vegetation.

Visual Effects – Operation (full development in place)**Visual Amenity, Residential Settlements**

- 6.18 The proposed development would have an extremely limited Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) locally due to the screening effects of landform, areas of settlement and hedgerow field boundaries as well as distance. There is potential for views of the new housing from the residential fringe of Johnstown to the west (viewpoint 10) of the site and Hafod House to the east (viewpoint 6). However, any views from these properties are likely to be from first floor level only due to the existing vegetation which affords an effective physical and visual buffer. No ground floor level views from properties within close range of the site are anticipated.
- 6.19 Beyond the ZVI there is potential for a small number of individual locations from which the development would be seen (viewpoint 9), however it would be a relatively small element of a wider panorama being set within the context of the settlement of Johnstown. Any views would be highly likely to be partly screened by existing built development and vegetation as well as the proposed GI.
- 6.20 Other than Rhosllanerchrugog and Ponciau, there would be no distant views of the application site from surrounding settlement areas, including Rhostyllen to the north and Ruabon to the south. Consequently, the proposed development would result in no effects upon local views from any settlement area other than Johnstown, Rhosllanerchrugog and Ponciau.
- 6.21 Overall, the new housing would largely be viewed in the context of the existing urban edge of Johnstown. However, potential views would vary depending upon property aspect and the degree of screening provided by existing intervening vegetation, landform and the proposed GI within the development itself. The magnitude of change is assessed as *low beneficial* resulting in a *slight beneficial* visual effect upon local views overall as a result of the development.

Road Users

- 6.22 As the proposed development would have a relatively confined ZVI, views would be limited to the local road network only. The range of available views is greatly influenced by the topographical nature of the area combined with vegetation along field boundaries and at roadsides.
- 6.23 In terms of close range visibility, users of Hafod Road (viewpoints 7, 8) and Bangor Road (B5426) could potentially experience intermittent views. However, potential views would be transient and infrequent, particularly from Bangor Road where the existing boundary vegetation and proposed structure planting would provide an effective visual screen. Users of Hafod Road would see more of the development when passing the site, though this would predominantly be of the development edge and perimeter planting which would filter visibility of the built development. There would also be views into the development toward the open space areas.
- 6.24 The low lying landscape of the site and intervening vegetation along field boundaries, roadsides and the railway line largely prevents views from other surrounding local lanes. Any potential distant views, most likely from higher ground to the west, of the proposed development are likely to be intermittent glimpses of the new housing which would be set within an extensive panorama and the urban context of the edge of Johnstown. Overall, the magnitude of change is assessed as *medium beneficial* resulting in a *slight beneficial* visual effect upon road users.

Rights of Way

- 6.25 The definitive public rights of way within the vicinity of the proposed development have been given due consideration within this assessment although not all are represented by photographic viewpoints. Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 represent views from the localised footpath network. The closest views of the development would be from footpath Esclusham Below 28, (viewpoint 3) which passes through the proposed residential development, footpaths Ruabon 118 and Esclusham Below 29 which cross the site's south-eastern corner, footpath Ruabon 117 (viewpoints 1, 2) which traverses the south-western edge of the site, footpath Esclusham Below 31 (viewpoint 6) to the east and footpath Esclusham Below 24 (viewpoint 4) to the north. Inevitably there would be a significant change in the local views from footpaths Esclusham Below 28, 29 and Ruabon 118, however they are not recognised trails and are relatively short sections of the localised right of way network which would be incorporated within the development's GI framework.
- 6.26 There is potential for more distant views from footpath Rhos 27, which passes through Johnstown to the west of the site, as it reaches higher ground, however views would be restricted to gaps between existing housing or across the existing roofscape and the proposed development would be seen in the context of the existing urban setting. Visibility of the built form is likely to be obscured by the existing settlement edge, intervening vegetation and new landscaping as part of the proposals, which in turn would also help to soften its appearance.
- 6.27 Depending upon the proximity and orientation of the user to the proposed development site, the magnitude of change in views from these rights of way varies from *low* to *medium beneficial* resulting in a *slight/moderate beneficial* effect overall upon views when passing the site.
- 6.28 There is potential for views of the proposed development from other, more distant, rights of way however these are likely to be glimpses only and effects upon the visual amenity would be negligible and not significant.

Recreational Sites

- 6.29 No formal recreational sites would be affected by the proposed development. Users of Hafod Country Park, located immediately north of the application site, would experience some visibility of the proposed development, however views would be from specific vantage points within the park (viewpoint 5) and the development would be seen in the context of Johnstown and other urban influences such as the A483 and Hafod Landfill Site and are not considered to be significant. The magnitude of change is assessed as *low/medium* beneficial resulting in a *slight beneficial* visual effect upon local views overall.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The proposed development site lies within the local Landscape Character Area identified as '*Rhosllanerchrugog – Rhostyllen, Ruabon – Perycae*' which is largely a low lying landscape with urban and agricultural influences characterised by concentrated settlement and industrial heritage as well as surrounding farmland enclosed by hedgerows and post and wire fencing. The site is considered to be of *low* landscape sensitivity to the proposal due to its predominantly urban character. The landscape is not recognised by any formal designation such as 'National Park' or 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty', nor does it lie within Green Belt land.

- 7.2 There would be a *negligible/slight* effect upon the landscape fabric of the proposed development area; it currently being brownfield land with no features of particular landscape value. The development would have an effect upon the 'Rhosllanerchrugog – Rhostyllen, Ruabon – Perycae' local Landscape Character Area within which the site falls, this would be limited in extent to an area approximately 0.8km to the north, and approximately 0.5km to the west. In terms of local character, potential effects would be largely confined to perimeter of the site.
- 7.3 Localised screening largely provided by existing landform but also field boundary and roadside vegetation would restrict potential views from the north, east and south, while the existing settlement fringe would limit potential visibility from the west. The proposed development would be seen in the context of the existing settlement area of Johnstown, Rhosllanerchrugog and Ponciau, which lies close to the western edge of the application site, extending to higher ground further west. There would be no views from other surrounding settlement areas. The essential characteristics of the landscape would remain; the proposed development would be located within an established urban setting and would be seen as a component of the landscape rather than dominating it. At close range the development would be a notable element within the landscape, however it is considered that it would bring significant improvements to the localised area, resulting in a *slight* beneficial effect upon the local landscape character overall. At a greater distance the development would be less obvious, due to the fact it would either be screened or certainly obscured by the localised topography, mature vegetation and existing built development, any potential visibility would be in the context of the existing settlement adjacent to it, along with surrounding urban pressures including the A483, which has a strong influence on the local landscape, and localised screening. Since the effects would not be extensive in terms of distance from the site, there would not be any effect upon other local landscape character areas within the wider landscape.
- 7.4 The proposed development would have a relatively confined ZVI. Effects upon views from existing dwellings would largely be limited to the residential edge of Johnstown in closest proximity to the site; potential first floor level views from residential properties at Gwalia and Glasfryn. Dwellings likely to experience views of the proposed development would effectively screen potential distant views from other houses within the eastern part of Johnstown. There is also the potential for more distant views from individual properties further west within Rhosllanerchrugog and Ponciau but they would be limited in their extent. Visibility of the development would not extend to the surrounding settlements of Rhostyllen or Ruabon which lie to the north and south respectively, and therefore there would be no adverse effect upon local views. Overall, a *slight beneficial* visual effect is expected upon local views from existing properties with the likelihood of experiencing first floor level views only due to intervening vegetation and proximity.
- 7.5 Views of the proposed development from the local road network would be mostly limited to those closest to the site; Hafod Road and Bangor Road (B5426). The proposed development would have a *slight beneficial* visual effect upon the sections of road closest to the site.
- 7.6 Views of the proposed development from public rights of way would be limited to those in closest proximity to the site which afford close and medium range visibility. The visual effect would vary between *moderate beneficial*, where the footpath passes through the core of the site, and *slight beneficial*. All views from the local footpath network would be transient in their nature and are not considered to be significant.

- 7.7 Overall, it is considered that the proposed residential development would not be out of scale or context with the nature of the landscape in which it is proposed, being located within an area of little intrinsic landscape interest adjacent to an existing settlement area. The site would be vastly improved by the high quality housing development with associated infrastructure and landscaping, set on the edge of the existing and well established town of Johnstown. The proposals would contribute positively to the landscape and would not be incongruent with its setting of the existing urban edge. Furthermore, there would be no significant adverse effect upon the character or visual amenity of the local area, in fact it would benefit the area in terms of both landscape and visual enhancements as well as improvements to the local biodiversity through the enhancement of existing and creation of new wildlife habitats through the implementation of a creatively designed framework of Green Infrastructure.
- 7.8 As such, it is considered that the proposed residential development could successfully be assimilated into the local landscape without unacceptable landscape or visual effects.

ⁱ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition (GLVIA) (2002)

ⁱⁱ Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland (LCA) (2002)

ⁱⁱⁱ Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) Third Edition, Landscape Institute-Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2012

^{iv} Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 5 (2012)

^v Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Technical Advice Note (TAN) 12 – Design (2009)

^{vi} Wrexham County Borough Unitary Development Plan (Adopted February 2005)

^{vii} Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance (Adopted March 2007)

^{viii} Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Technical Advice Note (TAN) 16 – Sport, Recreation and Open Space (2009)

^{ix} Wrexham County Borough Guidance Note No. 10 – Public Open Space in New Housing Development (2008)

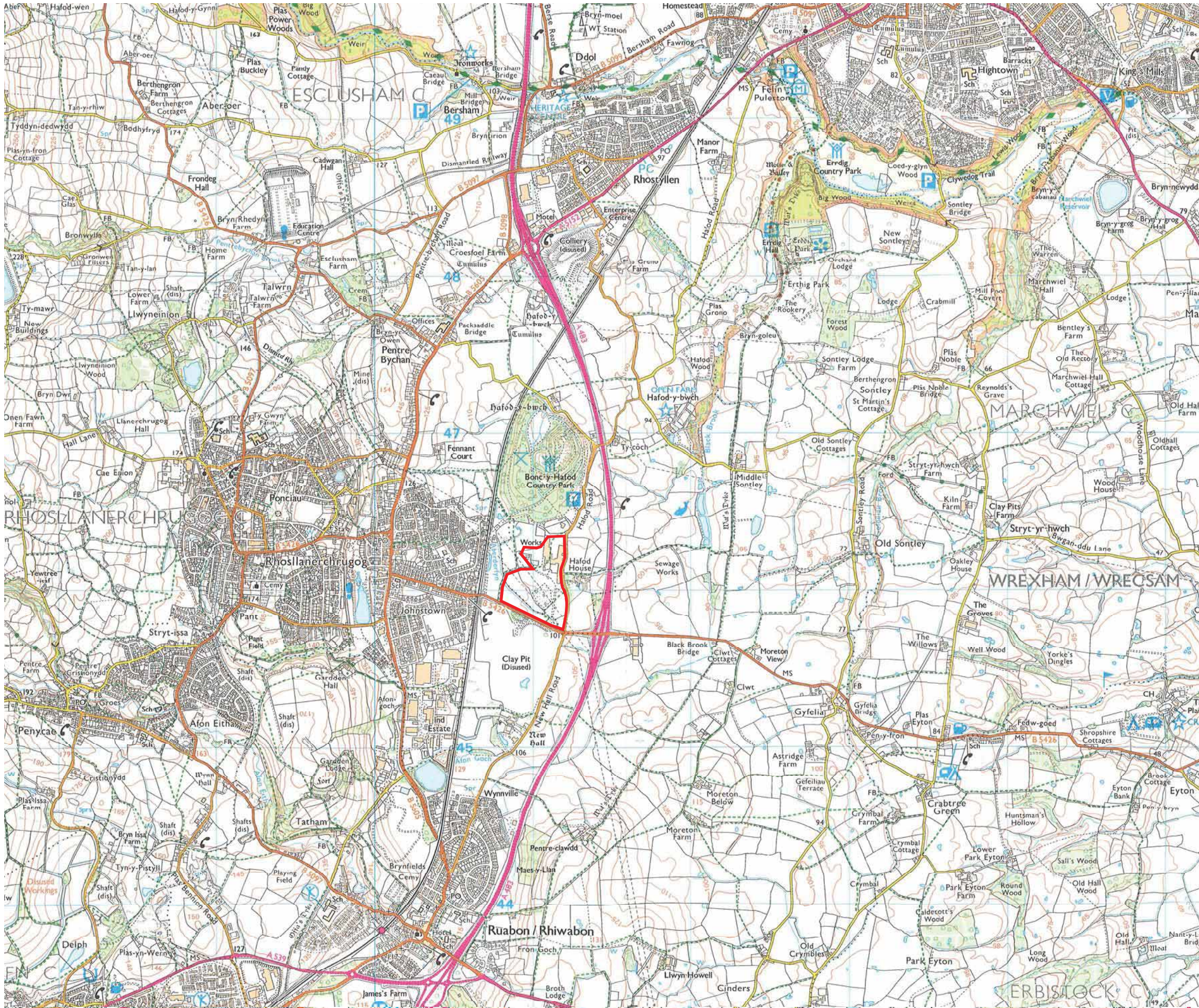
^x Wrexham County Borough Play Strategy 2009-2013

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Application Site



Gladman Developments Ltd.
Dennis Ruabon, Hafod Tileries,
Johnstown, Wrexham

SITE LOCATION



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Figure 1

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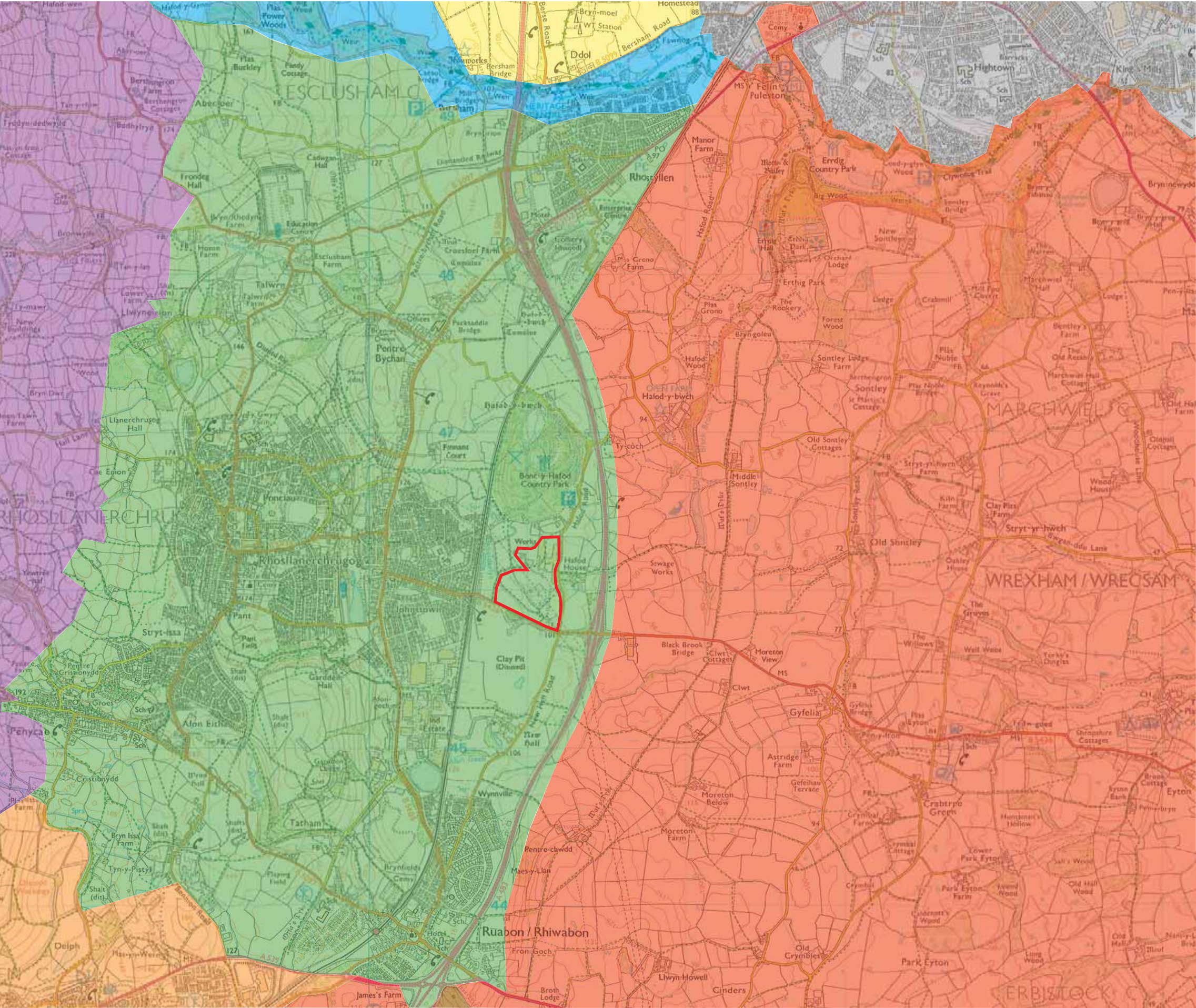
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Johnstown, Wrexham

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER
(LANDMAP Character Areas,
Countryside Council For Wales)
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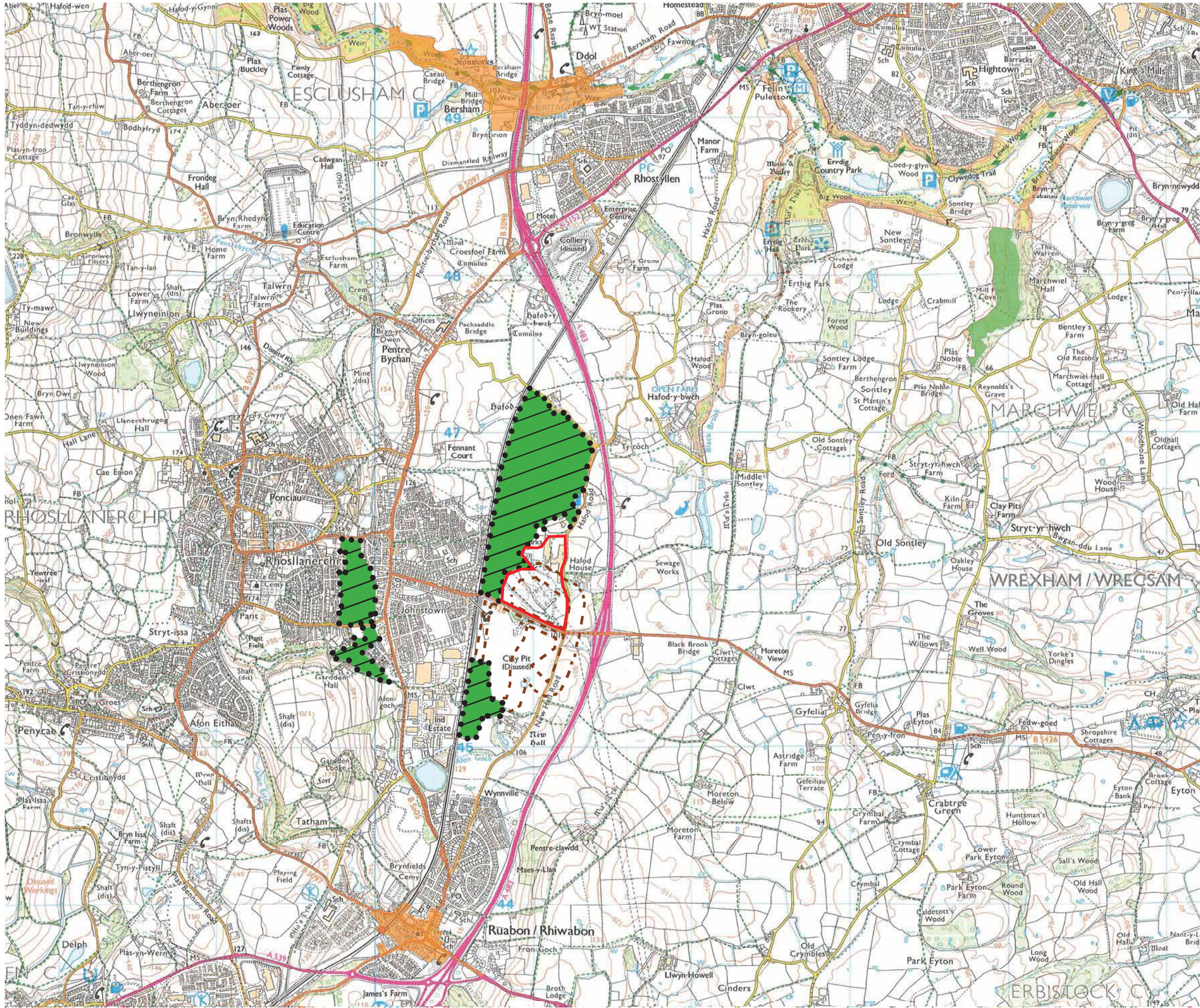
January 2013

Figure 2



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- Application Site
- Conservation Area
(Wrexham UDP Saved Policy EC7, EC8)
- Biodiversity Conservation
(Wrexham UDP Saved Policy EC6)
- Minerals Buffer Zone
(Wrexham UDP Saved Policy MW11)
- Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
- Stryt Las A'r Hafod
Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Other Site of Special Scientific Interest
(SSSI)



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Johnstown, Wrexham

LANDSCAPE DESIGNATIONS

NTS @ A3

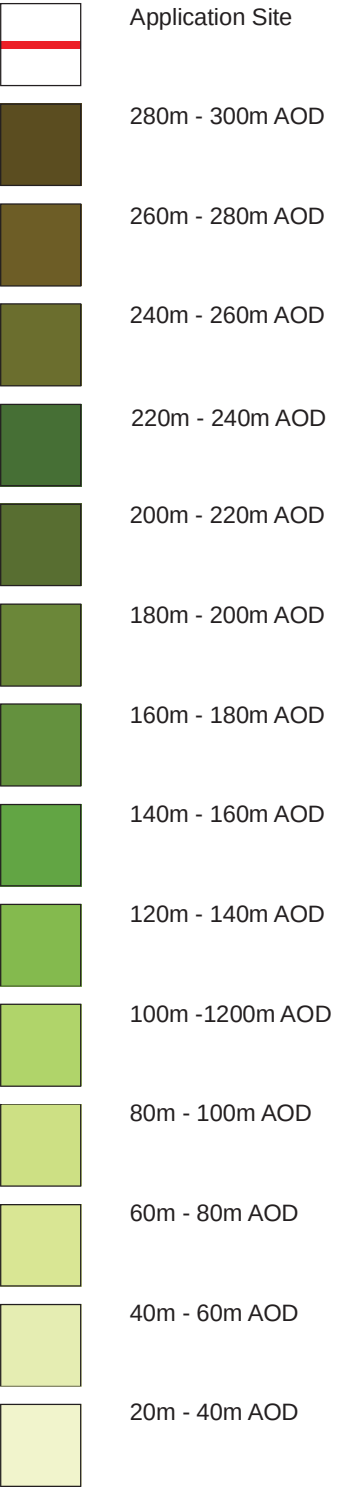
EA / MDP

January 2013

Figure 3

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TOPOGRAPHY

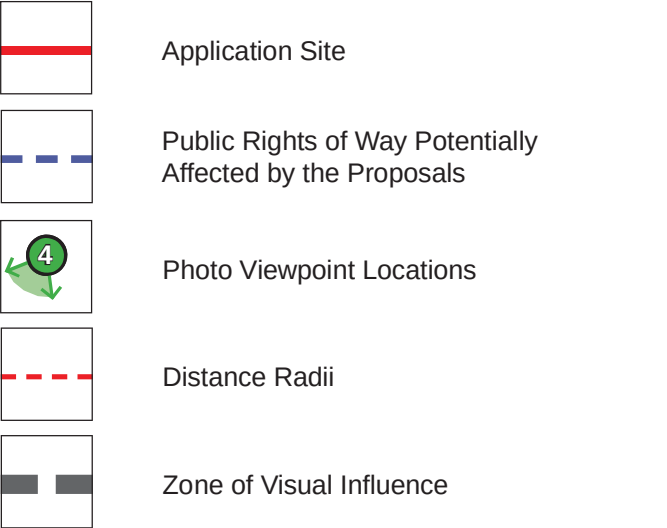


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Figure 4

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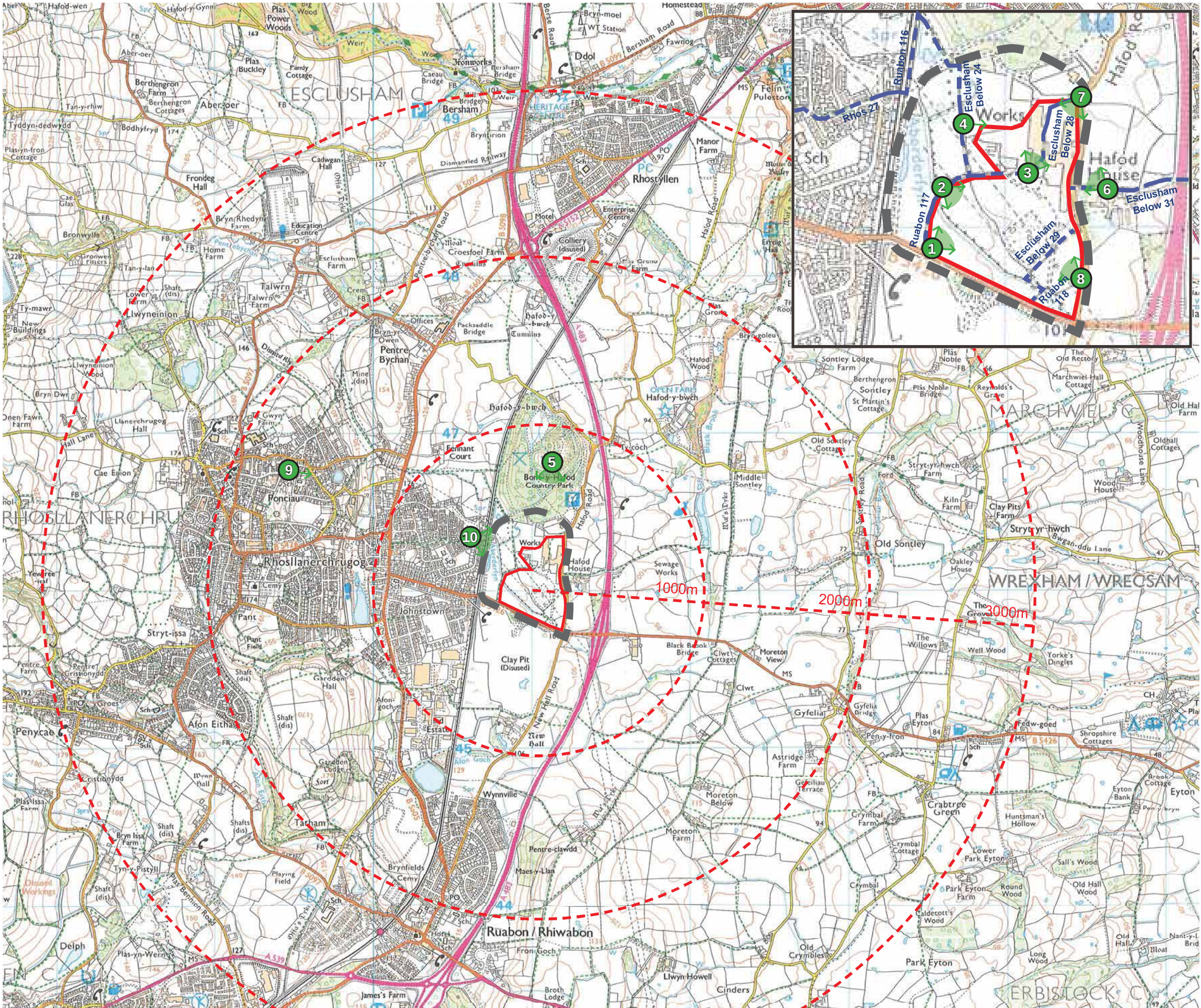
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Note:-
The ZVI provides a representative boundary and representative area of visual influence.

Within the Zone, existing landscape and / or physical features provide localised screening effects.

Further distant views may occur outside the Zone boundary, although the significance of these views is considered to be negligible as a result of the distance and intervening screening effects.



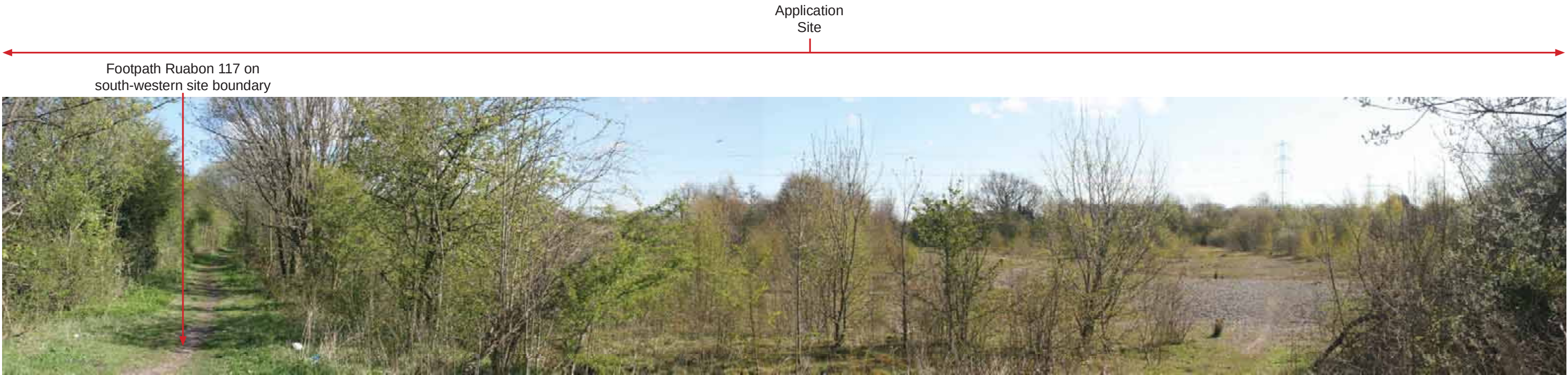


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 1: View north-east from public footpath Ruabon 117 (close to junction with Bangor Road B5426)

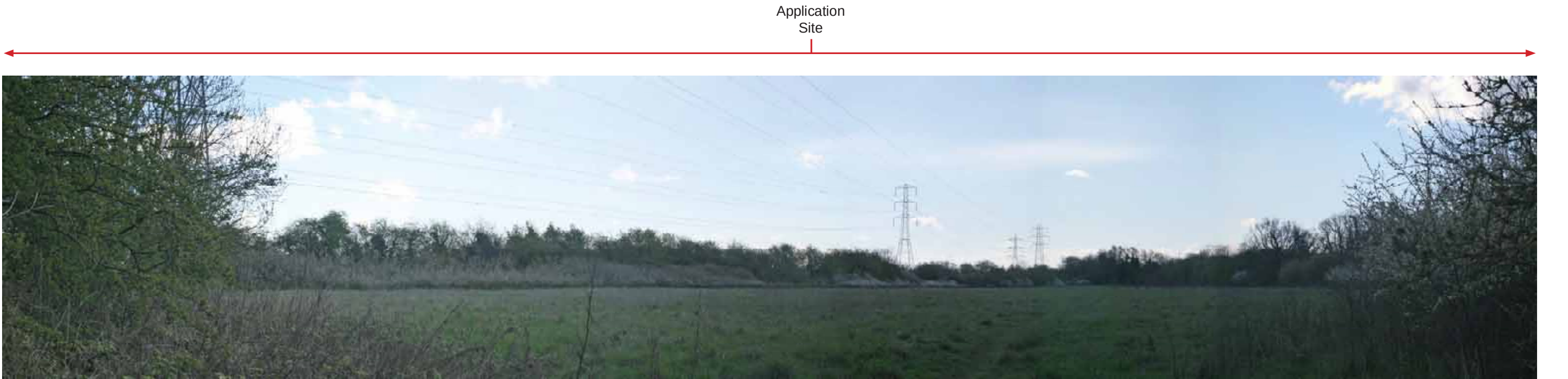


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 2: View south-east from public footpath Esclusham Below 28



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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS 1 & 2

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Figure 6

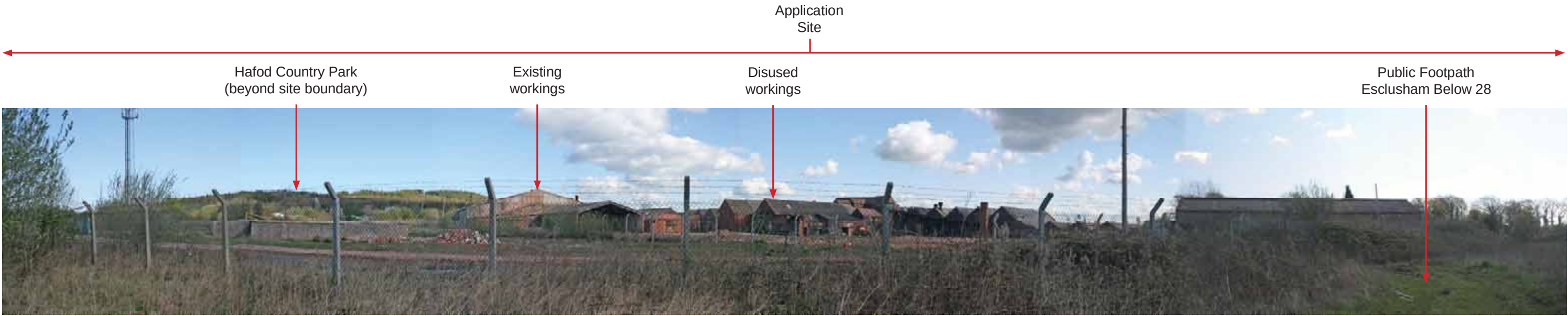


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 3: View north-east from public footpath Esclusham Below 28

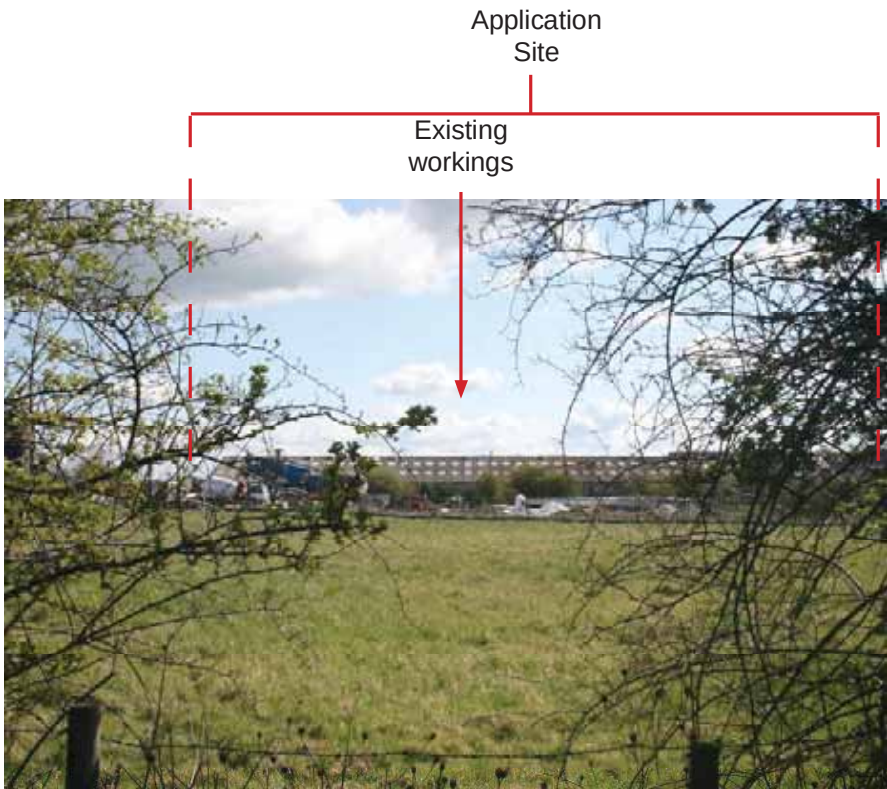


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 4: View east from public footpath Esclusham Below 24



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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS 3 & 4



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Figure 6

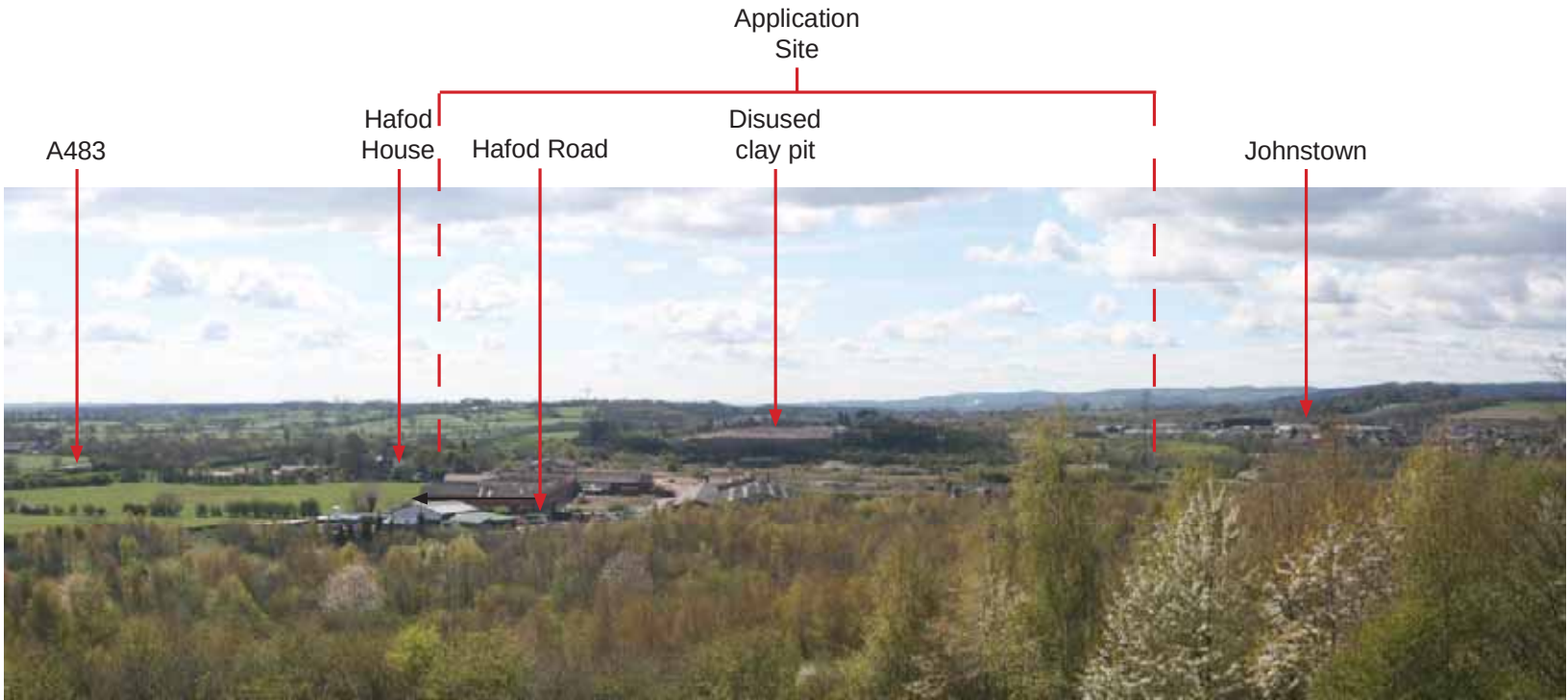


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 5: View south from Hafod Country Park

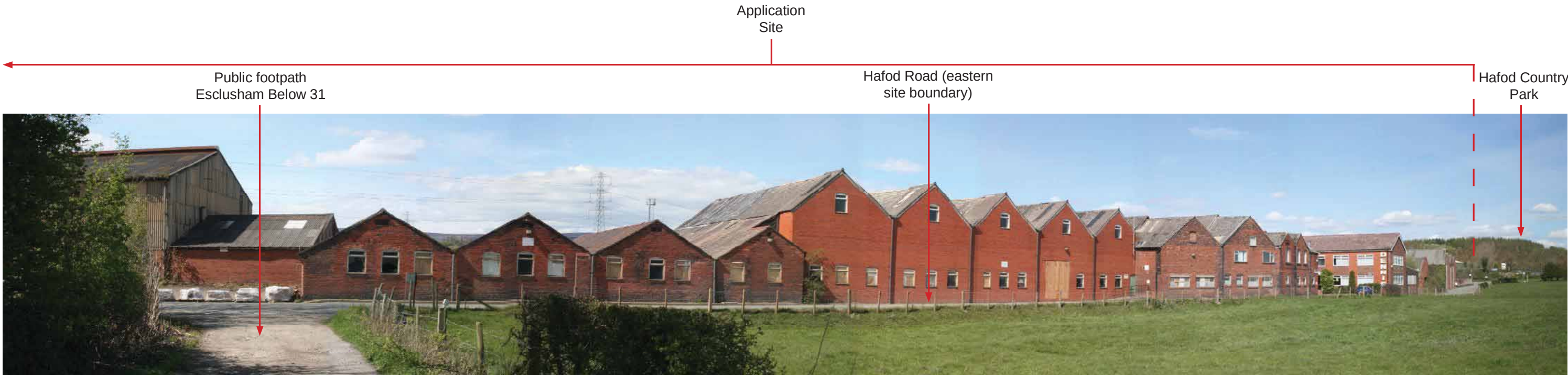


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 6: View west from public footpath Esclusham Below 31



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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS 5 & 6

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Figure 6

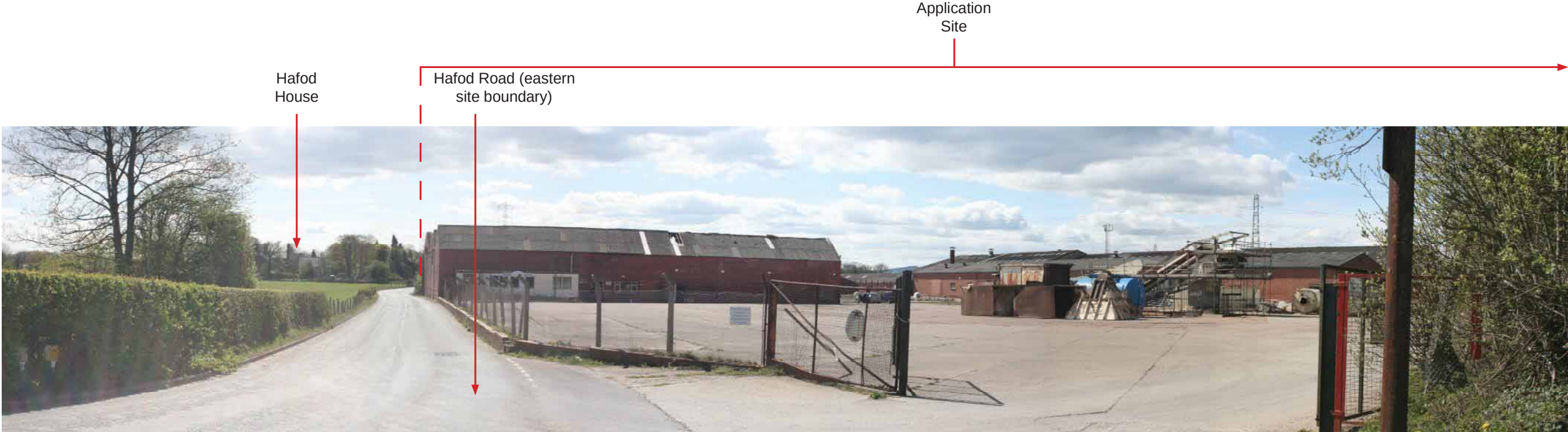


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 7: View south-west from Hafod Road

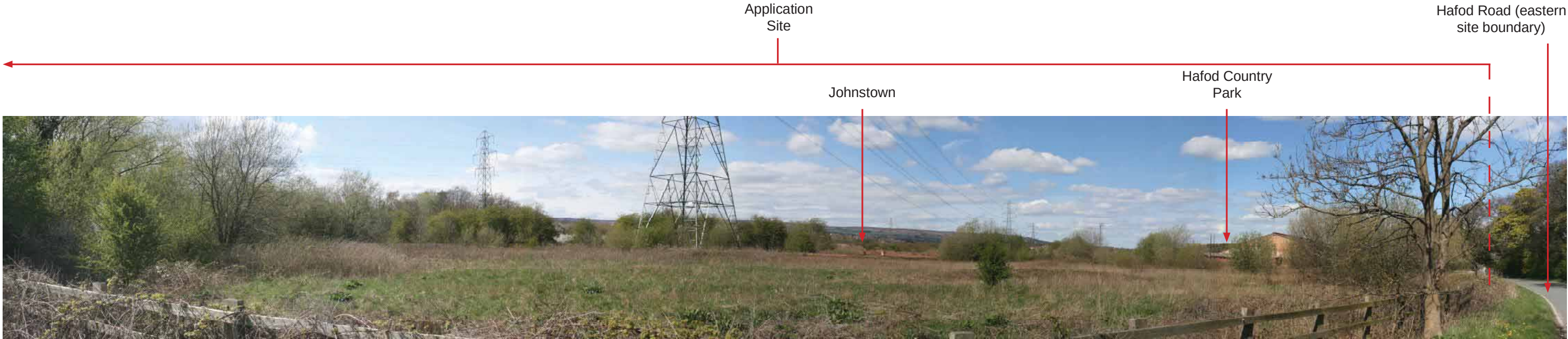


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 8: View west from Hafod Road



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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS 7 & 8

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Figure 6



PHOTO VIEWPOINT 9: View east from junction of South Lane / Johnson Street, Ponciau

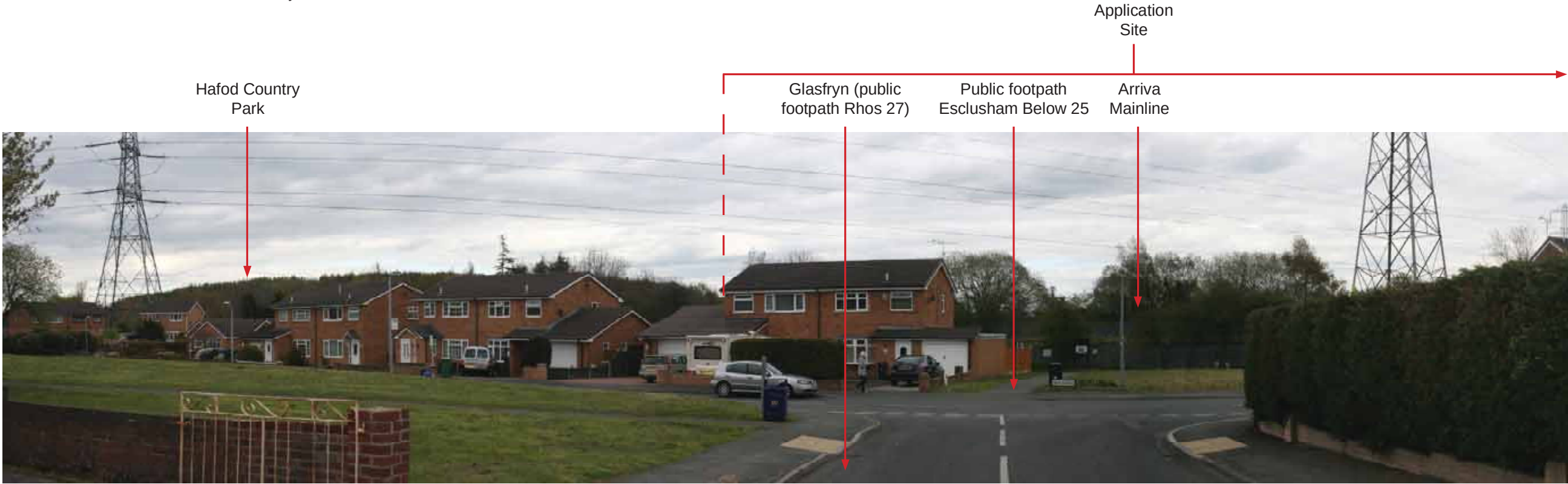


PHOTO VIEWPOINT 10: View east from Glasfryn (public footpath Rhos 27), Johnstown



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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS 9 & 10

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Figure 6