



Elite Ecology

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**Land off A539,
Hanmer**



Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

November 2020



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1 Introduction

1.1 Report rationale

This report relates to land situated adjacent to the A539, Hanmer, Wrexham, Wales, SY13 3EN (Central OS Grid Reference: SJ 46126 40423). CL Edwards and Son commissioned Elite Ecology to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of the site. To fulfill this brief, a desktop study and field survey were undertaken.

The LVIA (the 'submitted LVIA') was undertaken following the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third Edition (the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment & Management, 2013).

This assessment defines the existing landscape and visual baseline environments; assesses their sensitivity to change; describes the key landscape and visual related aspects of the proposed development; describes the nature of the anticipated change upon both the landscape and visual environments; assesses the effects during construction, the period following completion prior to the maturing of mitigation scheme (short to medium term) and once the mitigation scheme is mature (long term). The field survey was undertaken on the 23rd November 2020.

1.2 Site description and works

The site is situated in a rural area outside of Hanmer, a small village approximately 16km south west of Wrexham in Wrexham County Borough. The centre of Hanmer is located approximately 1km south west of the survey site. In the 2011 census, the population of Hanmer and the surrounding hamlets was 665.

The site contains four habitat types, in the form of Hedge, arable land, standing water – eutrophic and scrubland. Within the wider landscape, further habitats are present. These come in the form of additional structures (and their associated land), agricultural land, broadleaved woodland and hedgerows. Photographs of the site are found within Appendix C.

The current proposals involve the construction of touring caravan plots.

1.3 The Study Area

It is accepted practice within landscape and visual assessment work that the extent of the study area for a development proposal is broadly defined by the visual envelope of the proposed development site and the anticipated extent of the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) arising from the development itself. In this case a study area of 2km has been agreed as being appropriate to cover all potentially significant landscape and visual impacts.

Figure 1: The ZTV for the study site, as shown by the red outline. The study site is shown by the yellow star. This has been chosen based on the topography and sites of significance within the area that could be impacted by the proposals.



1.4 The Aims of the Study

The aim of this report is to provide a full assessment of the potential landscape and visual effects that the proposed development will have. The assessment is undertaken whilst taking into account all of the relevant legislation and policies that are in place. The assessment process comprises of two main factors, the first for landscape and the second for visual effects.

Landscape effects derive from changes in the physical landscape that could give rise to changes in its character and how this is experienced. This may in turn affect the perceived value of the local landscape. Due to the inherently dynamic nature of the landscape, change arising from a development may not necessarily be significant.

Visual effects relate to the changes that a proposed development will have on the composition from nearby viewpoints. Visual effects often result from changes to the landscape through to people's responses to these changes and the overall effects in relation to visual amenity.

2 Methodology

2.1 Overview

“Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 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 people’s views and visual amenity.” (GLVIA, 3rd Edition, 2013, para 1.1). Sections 2.20-2.22 of the same guidance indicate that the two components (assessment of landscape effects, and assessment of visual effects) are “related but very different considerations”.

2.2 Assessment

The assessment method draws upon the established Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd edition (LI & IEMA, 2013) and An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014) and other recognised guidelines. The methodology has three key stages, which are described in more detail in subsequent sections, as follows:

- Baseline – includes the gathering of documented information; agreement of the scope of the assessment with the client and/or local planning authority; site visits and initial reports to client of issues that may need to be addressed within the design.
- Design – input into the design / review of initial design / layout / options and mitigation options.
- Assessment – includes an assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the scheme, requiring site based work and the completion of a full report and supporting graphics.

2.2.1 Assessment Terminology and Judgements

The key terms used within assessments are as follows (some of these contribute to other classifications in the assessment process):

- Susceptibility
- Landscape Value
- Landscape Sensitivity
- Visual Sensitivity
- Scale
- Duration
- Extent
- Magnitude
- Significance

Susceptibility is assessed for both landscape receptors such as designated areas and landscape character areas, and for visual receptors (people). It indicates the ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the proposed development “without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.” (GLVIA, 3rd version, para 5.40). A description of how susceptibility is evaluated for each receptor type is included below. It is rated on the following scale:

- High – undue consequences are likely to arise from the proposed development.
- Medium – undue consequences may arise from the proposed development.
- Low - undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the proposed development.

Susceptibility of landscape character areas is influenced by their characteristics and is frequently considered (though often recorded as ‘sensitivity’ rather than susceptibility) within documented landscape character assessments and capacity studies. Susceptibility of designated landscapes is influenced by the nature of the special qualities and purposes of designation and/or the valued elements, qualities or characteristics, indicating the degree to which these may be unduly affected by the development proposed.

Susceptibility of accessible or recreational landscapes is influenced by the nature of the landscape involved; the likely activities and expectations of people within that landscape and the degree to which those activities and expectations may be unduly affected by the development proposed. Susceptibility of visual receptors is primarily a function of the expectations and occupation or activity of the receptors (GLVIA 3rd version, para 6.32).

Landscape Value is “the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society”(GLVIA, 3rd version, page 157). It is rated on the following scale:

- National/International – Designated landscapes which are nationally or internationally designated for their landscape value – including National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage sites; Heritage Coast and National Scenic Areas.
- Local/District – Locally or regionally designated landscapes (e.g. Area of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas); also areas which local evidence (such as tourism guides, landscape character assessments or other documentary information) indicates as being more valued than the surrounding area.
- Community – ‘everyday’ landscape which is appreciated by the local community but has little or no wider recognition of its value.
- Limited – despoiled or degraded landscape with little or no evidence of being valued by the community.

Sensitivity of landscape character types is rated within the range of High-Medium-Low-Negligible and is assessed on the following basis:

- High - areas of landscape with particularly distinctive attributes and defining characteristics that are susceptible to relatively small changes.
- Medium - areas of landscape with moderately distinctive attributes and defining characteristics that are reasonably tolerant of change.
- Low - areas of landscape with no particular distinctive attributes and defining characteristics and are thus potentially tolerant of noticeable change.

Sensitivity of visual receptors is primarily a function of the expectations and occupation or activity of the receptor. Ratings (High, Medium and Low) are assigned to visual receptors on the follow basis:

- High - viewers which are highly attuned to their surroundings, with proprietary interest and prolonged viewing opportunities
- Medium - viewers with a moderate awareness of their surroundings
- Low - viewers with a passing awareness of their surroundings

For visual receptors; judgements of susceptibility and value are closely interlinked considerations; for example the most valued views are likely to be those which people go and visit because of the available view – and it is at those viewpoints that their expectations will be highest. The value attributed to visual receptors also relates to the value of the view – for example a National Trail is nationally valued for its access, not necessarily for its views.

Views will be treated as valued where there is documentary evidence of that value – such as recommendations to visitors; or reference within special qualities of designated areas. The sensitivity of visual receptors is generally rated as follows:

- National value and High susceptibility – visitors to valued viewpoints or routes which people might visit purely to experience the view, e.g. promoted or well-known viewpoints, routes from which views that form part of the special qualities of a designated landscape can be well appreciated; key designed views; panoramic viewpoints marked on maps.
- Local value and High susceptibility –people in locations where they are likely to pause to appreciate the view, such as from local waypoints such as benches; or at key views to/from local landmarks. Visitors to local attractions, heritage assets or public parks where views are an important contributor to the experience, or key views into/out of Conservation Areas would also fall into this category.
- Community value and High susceptibility –people in the streets around their home, or using public rights of way, navigable waterways or accessible open space (public parks, open access land).
- Limited value and High susceptibility –people in their own homes.
- National value and Medium susceptibility – users of promoted scenic rail routes.
- Local value and Medium susceptibility – users of promoted scenic local road routes.
- Community value and Medium susceptibility – users of cycle routes, local roads and railways.
- Limited value and Medium susceptibility – outdoor workers.
- National or Local value and Low susceptibility – users of A-roads which are promoted scenic routes.

- Community value and Low susceptibility – users of sports facilities such as cricket grounds and golf courses.
- Limited value and Low susceptibility – users of Motorways and A-roads; shoppers at retail parks, people at their (indoor) places of work.

Scale of effect identifies the degree of change which would arise from the development. It is rated on the following scale:

- Large – Total or major alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally changed.
- Medium - Partial alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be noticeably changed.
- Small – Minor alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be largely unchanged despite discernible differences.
- Negligible – Very minor alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally unchanged with barely perceptible differences.

Duration of effect identifies the time period over which the change to the receptor as a result of the development would arise. It is rated on the following scale:

- Permanent – the change is expected to be permanent and there is no intention for it to be reversed.
- Long-term – the change is expected to be in place for 10-25 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or no longer occurring beyond that timeframe.
- Medium-term – the change is expected to be in place for 2-10 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or no longer occurring beyond that timeframe.
- Short-term – the change is expected to be in place for 0-2 years and will be reversed, fully mitigated or no longer occurring beyond that timeframe.

Most effects will be Long term or Permanent; however Medium or Short term effects may be identified where mitigation planting is proposed or local factors will result in a reduced duration of effect (for example where maturing woodland will screen views in future). The effects arising from the construction of the development will usually be Short term.

The **Extent** of effects indicates the geographic area over which the effects will be felt. This is rated as follows:

- Limited – site, or part of site, or small part of a receptor area (< approx. 10%).
- Localised – site and surroundings up to 2km, or part of receptor area (up to approx. 25%).
- Intermediate – up to approx. 2-4km, or around half of receptor area.
- Wide – beyond 4km, or more than half of receptor.

The representative viewpoints are used as ‘samples’ on which to base judgements of the scale of effects on visual receptors. As these viewpoints represent a range of different types of visual receptors, duration and extent are not judged at representative viewpoint locations. Thus, the scale of effect is assessed at representative viewpoints, but duration and extent is judged only when assessing impacts on the visual receptors. For specific viewpoints (chosen because they are key and sometimes promoted viewpoints within the landscape), duration and extent are assessed, with extent reflecting the extent to which the development affects the valued qualities of the view from the specific viewpoint. For example a very distant development would typically be judged to have a Limited extent of effect on a 360 degree panoramic view; but might be judged to have a greater extent if it appeared within the focal area of a channelled or designed view.

The **Magnitude** of effect is rated within the range of High-Medium-Low-Negligible and is informed by combining the scale, duration and extent of effect.

- High – a total or major alteration to key elements, features or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally changed.
- Medium – a partial alteration to key elements, features or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be noticeably changed.
- Low – a minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be largely unchanged despite discernible differences.
- Negligible – a very minor alteration to key elements, features or characteristics, such that post development the baseline situation will be fundamentally unchanged with barely perceptible differences.

Where the Scale of effect is judged to be Negligible the Magnitude is also assumed to be Negligible and no further judgement is required.

Significance indicates the importance or gravity of the effect. The process of forming a judgement of significance of effect is based upon the assessments of magnitude of effects and sensitivity of the receptor to come to a professional judgement of how important this effect is.

The significance ratings indicate a 'sliding scale' of the relative importance of the effect, with Major being the most important and Minimal being the least. Effects that are Major-Moderate or Major are considered to be significant. Effects of Moderate significance or less are "of lesser concern" (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 3.35). It should also be noted that whilst an effect may be significant, that does not necessarily mean that such an impact would be unacceptable, or should necessarily be regarded as an "undue consequence" (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 5.40).

Where intermediate ratings are given, e.g. "Moderate-Slight", this indicates an effect that is both less than Moderate and more than Slight, rather than one which varies across the range.

In such cases, the higher rating will always be given first; this does not mean that the impact is closer to that higher rating, but is done to facilitate the identification of the more significant effects within tables. Intermediate judgements may also be used for judgements of Magnitude.

2.2.2. Positive/Adverse/Neutral

Effects are defined as adverse, neutral or positive. Neutral effects are those which overall are neither adverse nor positive but may incorporate a combination of both. The decision regarding the significance of effect and the decision regarding whether an effect is beneficial or adverse are entirely separate. For example, a rating of Major and Positive would indicate an effect that was of great significance and on balance positive, but not necessarily that the proposals would be extremely beneficial. Whether an effect is Positive, Neutral or Adverse is identified based on professional judgement. GLVIA 3rd edition indicates at paragraph 2.15 that this is a "particularly challenging" aspect of assessment, particularly in the context of a changing landscape.

2.2.3. Landscape and Townscape Character

Details regarding the considerations of the susceptibility of landscape and townscape characters to the effects from the proposed development are also considered as part of the Visual Impact Assessment. The susceptibility of landscape and townscape character areas is judged based on both the attributes of the receiving environment and the characteristics of the proposed development works.

The size of the development, the nature and susceptibility of the receiving landscape, as well as local 'barriers' in the landscape (such as breaks of topography, woodlands, settlements, roads and/or rivers) will determine the exact extent of effects for each development.

2.2.4. Landscape Designations

The effects on designated areas are considered and assessed whilst taking into account the valued characteristics of any designation that could be affected.

2.2.5. Site

The effects of physical changes to the site are assessed in terms of the effects on the physical fabric.

2.2.6. Viewpoints and Visual Receptors

A wide variety of visual receptors can reasonably be anticipated to be affected by the proposed development. Within the baseline assessment, the ZTV study and site visits are used to determine which visual receptors are likely to be most significantly affected and therefore merit detailed assessment. In line with guidance (GLVIA, 3rd Edition, 2013); both representative and specific viewpoints may be identified to inform the assessment. In general, the majority of viewpoints will be representative – representing the visual receptors at the distance and direction in which they are located and of the type(s) that would be present at that location. The representative viewpoints have generally been selected in locations where significant effects would be anticipated; though some may be selected outside of that zone – either to demonstrate the reduction of effects with distance; or to specifically ensure the representation of a particularly sensitive receptor.

The types of visual receptors likely to be included with the assessment are:

- Users of walking routes or accessible landscapes within 4 km of the proposed development (including Public Rights of Way, National and Regional Trails and other long distance routes, Common Land, Open Access Land, permissive paths, land held in trust (e.g. Woodland Trust, National Trust) offering free public access, and other regularly used, permitted walking routes;
- Visitors to and residents of settlements within 4 km of the proposed development;
- Visitors to specific valued viewpoints;
- Visitors to attractions or heritage assets for which landscape and views contribute to the experience – typically within 4 km of the proposed development;
- Users of roads or identified scenic routes within 4 km.

With the exception of specific viewpoints, each route, settlement or location will encompass a range of possible views, which might vary from no view of the development to very clear, close views. Therefore, effects are described in such a way as to identify where views towards the development are likely to arise and what the scale, duration and extent of those views are likely to be.

The assessment of effects on settlements focuses primarily on the visual amenity of public spaces, though views from groups of dwellings will also be noted in the descriptions.

3 Planning Policy

The LVIA will take account of all the relevant guidelines, legislation and planning policy documents in relation to landscape and visual issues, the most relevant of which are outlined below.

The protection of our landscapes are directly and indirectly covered by various legislation to ensure the most valued and important landscapes, their intrinsic visual qualities and the unique individual elements and components within are maintained.

The legislation that is relevant includes:

- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- Environment Act 1995
- Countryside Act 1968
- The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

This LVIA will also refer to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Guidance (NPPG), with all relevant NPPF and NPPG principles and objectives identified and referenced throughout the report.

The application site falls within the administrative area of Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC), within the county Clwyd. The current development plan for this area is the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP), which was adopted by the local council in 2005. The council is currently preparing the Local Development Plan (LDP), which will replace the current UDP, although this had not been devised at the time of writing.

Part 1 of the UDP outlines the Council's broad intention for development in the area by providing a framework for more specific policies. The following policies relate to landscapes:

- Policy PS2:
"Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment"
- Policy PS4:
"Development should use previously developed brownfield land comprising vacant, derelict or underused land in preference to the use of greenfield land, wherever possible, particularly so where greenfield land is of ecological, landscape or amenity value, or comprises agricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a quality."

Part 2 of the UDP identified specific policies that should be adhered to within developments. These are as follows:

- Policy GDP1:
“All new development should:-
 - A. *Ensure that the built development in its scale, design and layout, and 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.*
 - F. *Ensure the safety and amenity of the public and safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land or air, hazards from industry and quarrying, and associated noise, odour or vibration arising from development.”*
- Policy EC4:
“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. Development which results in the loss or significant damage to valuable trees, important hedgerows or ancient woodland sites will not be permitted.”
- Policy EC5:
“Within Special Landscape Areas, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Development, other than for agriculture, small-scale farm-based and other rural enterprises, and essential operational developments by utility service providers, will be strictly controlled. Development will be required to conform to a high standard of design and landscaping, and special attention will be paid to minimising its visual impact both from nearby and distant viewpoints.”
- Policy EC7:
“Within, and in close proximity to, conservation areas, the priority will be to preserve and/or enhance those buildings, structures, streets, trees, open spaces, archaeological remains, views, and other elements which contribute to the unique character of the area. New buildings and alterations or additions to existing buildings in conservation areas, whether listed as of special architectural or historic interest or not, must reflect the design and character of the area as a whole and the form, scale, detailing and materials of existing buildings.”

The site also falls within the Maelor Landscape Character Area and this was also assessed during the production of this report.

4 Baseline

4.1 Site Description

The site is situated in a rural area outside of Hanmer, a small village approximately 16km south west of Wrexham in Wrexham County Borough. The centre of Hanmer is located approximately 1km south west of the survey site. In the 2011 census, the population of Hanmer and the surrounding hamlets was 665.

The site contains four habitat types, in the form of hedge, arable land, standing water – eutrophic and scrubland. Within the wider landscape, further habitats are present. These come in the form of additional structures (and their associated land), agricultural land, broadleaved woodland and hedgerows. Photographs of the site are found within Appendix C.

The main thrust of the development will be centred on the arable land located centrally on site.

The current proposals involve the construction of touring caravan plots.

The site will be used as a caravan site during its operational phase.

4.2. Landscape Features

On the site itself, a limited number of landscape features are present. These come in the form of arable land, scattered trees and hedgerows.

Nearby to the site, further landscape features are apparent in the form of waterbodies, residential dwellings, public footpaths, historic monuments, woodland, arable land and pastureland. No public footpaths, bridleways or roads run adjacent to the site.

4.3. Topography

The site itself is situated on ground that lies at around 80m above sea level. The site rises from 80m at the northernmost point, to 90m at the southernmost point of the field. From the northern boundary, it then rises to 93m, before dropping down. To the east, the land remains between 80m and 85m, leading to the A525. To the south, the land continues to rise offsite, to a peak of 95m, before again rising to 99m further afield. Finally, to the west, the site rises to 95m.

4.4 Vegetation

The site contains multiple floral species. Please refer to Elite Ecology's Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for details in relation to the vegetation.

4.5 **Landscape Character**

The Maelor Landscape Character Assessment was consulted to assess the landscape character and the impacts of the proposed scheme of works upon it.

4.5.1 Landscape Character Area:

The site falls in the landscape character area known as **Maelor**:

The area is uncharacteristic of Wales topographically, with it being described as being of little high ground on either side of the River Dee which meanders through the area. In addition to this, the area has been described as being more similar of Cheshire and Shropshire, and conjoins with the Cheshire Plains.

Historically, the area has seen a fossilisation of the medieval landscape, with moated settlement sites and open field systems with ridge and furrow cultivation all apparent to this day. It has been noted that the small town of Worthenbury is the site of a Saxon burgh. Parts of this landscape are being lost through changes in farming practices, but the western half of the area is still surviving, with this section described as being peaceful and tranquil.

The area is well-known for its meres and mosses and for its peat diggings.

The key characteristics of the landscape character are:

- Flood Plain or Rolling Lowland:
Sandstone and siltstone is overlain in places by glacial till, fluvio-glacial drift and river alluvium. This allows the gently undulating landform to be present, for example, adjacent to the River Dee.
- A Rural Agricultural Character:
The area is intensively farmed, with much arable land to the east.
- Mixed Native Hedgerows with Hedgerow Trees:
These are located in a medium-sized field pattern, with larger fields located to the east.
- Small Scale Deciduous Farm Woodland:
Blocks of woodland are scattered across the area, with these features interspersed with farmland.
- Meres, Mosses and Flooding:
This is located around the flood plain of the River Dee. In addition to this, there are scattered field ponds and mosses in the south-east are distinctive features.
- Relict Medieval Field Patterns:
The pastoral west illustrates the ridge and furrow cultivation patterns which are overlain by Parliamentary Enclosures.
- Archaeology:
Distinctive medieval, moated, manorial sites occur within the area, along with prehistoric ritual and funerary sites.

- Small, Rural Village Settlements, Farms and Parks:
Compact hamlets that are often of medieval formation are scattered within the area. An example of this would be Overton.
- A Unified Agricultural Landscape of Simple Composition:
A variety of land cover elements are present within the area, including pasture, rush, marsh, woodland and meres.
- Closely Related to Greater Cheshire Plain

4.6 ZTV Studies

A ZTV study was produced for the submitted LVIA based on potential double storey residential dwellings located on the application site. The ZTV was analysed using relevant software and took into account topographical modelling, including principal settlements, woodlands, landforms and other features of importance.

Based upon all the information collated, a relatively small ZTV was identified for the survey area at a maximum of 2km from the site.

The proposed visibility impacts have been assessed and explained within section 6.7 of this report. This illustrates that the areas immediately adjacent to the site are the main features to be impacted by the works, although this land is currently only used for livestock grazing. The small ZTV for the site is in relation to the local terrain and landscape features (namely trees) located around the site, thus limiting the visual impacts within the landscape.

4.7 Extent of Theoretical Visibility

Viewpoints 1 to 2 illustrate the baseline of the site taken from the west and south. These viewpoints lie inside of the site boundaries on private land.

Viewpoints 3 to 8 show more of the viewpoints that were assessed in relation to the conversion of the site into a caravan park. These were chosen to illustrate the locations of the visual receptors, such as residents, people using the public footpaths and roads in the areas. These are scattered around the ZTV and covers as broad a range as possible. All of these viewpoints were taken from public viewpoints. Please refer back to Figure 1 for this area.

4.8. Visual Receptors

Visual receptors are “the different groups of people who may experience views of the development” (GLVIA, 3rd edition, para 6.3). In order to identify those groups who may be significantly affected by the works, the baseline desk study, ZTV study and site visits have been used.

The different types of groups assessed within this report encompass residents within settlements; people using key routes such as roads; cycle ways or long distance paths; people within accessible or recreational landscapes; people using Public Rights of Way; or people visiting key viewpoints. In dealing with Public Rights of Way and local roads, receptors are grouped into areas where effects might be expected to be broadly similar, or areas which share particular factors in common (e.g. routes within an area of designated landscape).

Nine representative viewpoints were assessed during the field survey for the submitted LVIA (Viewpoints 1 to 8). These were situated at the locations within the local proximity to the site that would be visually impacted by the scheme of works. These are supported by panoramic photographs that are located within section 6.7.

4.8.1. Settlements

Settlements within the Study Area varies from rural villages and small towns. The nearest village is located to the south-east of the site in the form of Hanmer, with connecting road links to the site itself. When outside of the current curtilage of the village, rural fields line the roadside when travelling to the site. Scattered farms are then located across the landscape, with hamlets located on the main A525 to the north-east. All of these receptors have been considered when producing this LVIA.

4.8.2. Roads and Rail

The site is located to the west of the A539 and is accessed via a gateway that enters the current arable field. The A539 is a two-lane carriageway that links the settlement of Hanmer to the A525, which then leads further afield to larger settlements such as Bangor-on-Dee and Whitchurch.

None of the public roads within the study area are visible from the site itself, largely due to the existing hedgerow located on the western field boundary acting as a shield. However, the construction of the access road would create some visibility to users of the A539.

It is also worth mentioning that no railways will have visibility of the proposed development site, and once again all impacts will be of a negligible scale.

4.8.3. Recreational Routes

Within the study area, a few recreational routes are apparent, with public footpaths present within the 2km ZTV. However, none of these run close to the site, with current topography and land features (namely trees) limiting visibility of the site to these features. Therefore, all impacts will be of a negligible scale and impact.

4.8.4. Accessible and Recreational Landscapes

Within the study area, there are no accessible or recreational landscapes. Therefore, the impacts will be of a negligible scale to these features.

4.9 Landscape Designations and Value

4.9.1. Designated Landscapes

There are multiple scheduled monuments within the study area but none of these are visible from the site and will not be impacted by the proposed works.

There are two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the ZTV. These come in the form of Hanmer Mere (located approximately 1.1km to the south-west) and Llyn Bedydd (located approximately 1.4km to the south-east). It is also worth noting that Hanmer Mere is also a RAMSAR site.

The designated landscapes within the study area will not be affected by the proposed development works.

4.9.2. Local Landscape Value

Within the study area, there are some features that contribute to the value of the local landscape. A number of rolling pasturelands is present, features characteristic of the landscape character.

Additionally, there are some non-statutory nature designations present within a 2km search radius. The ecological data received from COFNOD confirmed the presence of five non-statutory protected site within 2km of the survey site. These are:

- Hanmer Hall Woods: A couple of small secondary woodlands with predominantly sycamore canopies. Black Wood has an area of willow over marshy ground. This ground is mainly bare mud with some water starwort and lesser skullcap. Hanmer Hall Wood and the rest of Black Wood are dry and have much bracken, bramble and stinging-nettle within the ground flora. Also present in this layer are such species as wood millet, bluebell, raspberry, yellow archangel and common hemp-nettle
- Croxton Marsh: Marshy fields along a brook. The marsh is of variable wetness with some swamp areas and some slopes of semi-improved grassland. The sward is diverse with much grasses and rushes. Other species found include water mint, yellow flag, marsh marigold, angelica, meadow vetchling, marsh horsetail and zigzag clover. There is some scattered alder and willow scrub.
- Cranberry Moss: Two small lowland bogs which have become wooded over. The western site has been recently clear-felled. The eastern bog has a low canopy of birch and willow species. There is little relict bog vegetation within the ground flora. Soft rush, bittersweet and pennywort are the most frequent species within the ground flora. Also present are marsh woundwort, yellow flag, purple moor-grass and gipsywort. On the eastern edge of the woodland is a small marsh dominated by soft rush and yorkshire fog with some common spotted orchid, tormentil and pignut.

- Arowry Moss: An old bog which has become woodland. Downy birch, alder, rowan and willow species form a short, often scrubby canopy. Beneath this some bog species still persist in the ground layer. There are several patches of Sphagnum moss as well as some purple moor-grass, Polytrichum moss and marsh violet. Other species found within the woodland include broad buckler fern, remote sedge, honeysuckle and lesser skullcap.
- Willis' Gorse and Marsh: A area of diverse habitats and species. The majority of the site is marsh with abundant yorkshire fog and rushes. The western marsh is short, neutral and semi-improved with much marsh horsetail, creeping buttercup and hairy sedge. The southern marsh is more acid and rank with tufted hair-grass dominant. Other species present in both marshes include tormentil, marsh willowherb, bog stitchwort and meadowsweet. At the southern tip of the site is a small area of lowland acid grassland and gorse scrub. Species such as common bent, sheep's fescue and heath bedstraw dominate here. Willis' Gorse is a recently fenced open woodland with much bracken in the clearings. Downy birch and alder are the most frequent trees on the mainly damp soil. Species present within the under developed ground flora include lady fern, blubell and raspberry.

All features that add to the local landscape value are not anticipated to be affected by the proposed works.

5 Design

5.1. The Proposal

Under the current proposals, the parcel of land is proposed to be developed into a caravan park with 38 plots. The proposed site will also accommodate vehicular access (road/driveway). This will also see the inclusion of necessary infrastructure, such as a shower/toilet block, electricity and drainage (of both rainwater and sewage).

The structure has been designed with a rustic feel, with a corrugated metal profile pitched roof, with timber post supports that will overhang the eaves, with timber weather boarding over fair faced concrete block walls, timber boarded doors and timber framed windows. The chemical toilet disposal point will have a timber screen surrounding it and a waste collection area constructed with vertical timber boarded panels, 2m x 2m, interspersed by intermediate posts.

The proposals will see the loss or alteration of approximately 1.18ha of arable land. The proposed development will not negatively impact upon any rare or protected habitats. The habitats to be affected are not uncommon across the local landscape. For any potential protected species, the works should comply fully with Elite Ecology's Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Tree Survey and GCN eDNA recommendations.

Very limited groundworks are anticipated, with only those associated with the one permanent structure on site required. The site will also be required to be prepared for the construction of the caravan pitches, with the trackway around the required drainage features. The disturbance is not dissimilar to when the crops on the field are harvested, and impacts from a landscape and visual perspective during construction will be limited.

The proposed foul drainage is to be a Biodisc and reed bed treatment, with the outfall to the existing pond or to a separate drainage field. The storm drainage from the shower block is proposed to be in the form of a soakaway.

The construction phase will take 6 months from planning permission being granted to the completion of all new features. The operational phase is anticipated to be permanent, with no plans at present to revert the site back to its current state.

An illustration of the site proposals can be found in Appendix A of this report.

6 Assessment

6.1. Introduction

The baseline study, in conjunction with the planning policy review, provides a sound basis to identify and discuss impacts and effects of the proposals on the landscape and visual resources. Impacts on landscape receptors and visual receptors are assessed separately.

The overall effects of the proposals on the landscape and visual amenity of the study area are outlined in the following sections in this report. These include separate impact assessment tables for each receptor. Any mitigation measures for the proposed development are also identified within section 7 of this report.

The purpose of the impact assessment is to determine what level of changes would be caused by the implementation of the proposals. This is done in order to provide the local authority with professionally produced and evaluated information to enable an informed decision on the acceptability of the proposals in the given site and landscape context as described in this report.

6.2. Predicted Landscape and Visual Effects

6.2.1. Construction Effects

The proposed development will take up to a year from planning permission being granted up to the completion of the works. Very limited groundworks are anticipated, with only those associated with the one permanent structure on site required. The site will also be required to be prepared for the construction of the caravan pitches, with the trackway around the required drainage features. Principal construction effects on the landscape resource in the area would include:

- The increase in activity on the site and lanes leading to it during the construction process. This would be to deliver materials and staffing to the site.

The increase in activity for the proposed time period is not considered an issue in the wider context of the character area as the existing road is already a busy arterial route.

6.3 Operational Effects

No major operational effects are anticipated once the construction is complete. The land is occasionally used for arable agricultural purposes currently. The development would result in an increase of visitors to the site. All visitors would continue to use the existing entrance trackway.

6.4 Effects on the Site's Landscape Features

The existing access trackway will be used during construction and for any maintenance purposes. There will be no effects on any of the site's landscape features as all will remain in situ barring the loss of the arable land located on site. Therefore, the scale of impacts will be slight due to the neighbouring land containing the same habitat that is present on the site itself. This means the landscape features will not be greatly altered by the works.

6.5 Effects on Landscape Character

At present, the site consists of multiple habitat types but is predominantly arable land. The site itself is surrounded by trees and hedgerows that are typical of the landscape character area, with the presence of these features limiting the site's visibility within the local landscape. The development would involve the permanent loss of approximately 1ha of the arable land to be replaced by the proposed development.

Although altering the landscape character from its current status, the effects are anticipated to be minimal. The site is not currently used for any recreational purposes, which means the development will result in an increase of people using the site for amenity purposes.

The assessment of effects on landscape character will be minimal due to the site not being visible from any public highways or public rights of way (e.g. footpaths, bridleways). The proposed works will not impact upon any of the current land usage within the area. The construction materials are proposed to be in-keeping with those located in structures within the area.

The effects on the landscape character will be highly localised to within close proximity of the site due to the topography of the land, the vegetation and trees which screen the site from the wider landscape.

Effect	Classification	Justification
Susceptibility	Medium	Some consequences on landscape character may arise from the proposed development.
Landscape Value	Limited	There is no evidence that the site is in use by the local community at present.
Land Sensitivity	Negligible-Low	The land sensitivity has been identified as negligible-low due to the proposed development altering the landscape slightly.
Visual Sensitivity	Low-Medium	The visual sensitivity in the character area is low because the site itself is not overly visible due to vegetation.
Scale	Medium	The proposed development will partially alter the landscape character currently present on site. The baseline will be notably changed by the proposed scheme of works.
Duration	Permanent	The current proposals aim for a permanent site for the residential dwellings, with no anticipated future alteration in the area of the planning proposal.
Extent	Localised	The extent of effects on the landscape character are localised as impacts will occur up to 2km from the site.
Magnitude	Medium	The magnitude of change in the landscape character area is medium due to the permanence of the development within the landscape.
Significance	Slight	Based on the information collated, the significance of the works is anticipated to be slight.

6.6 Effects on Landscape Designations

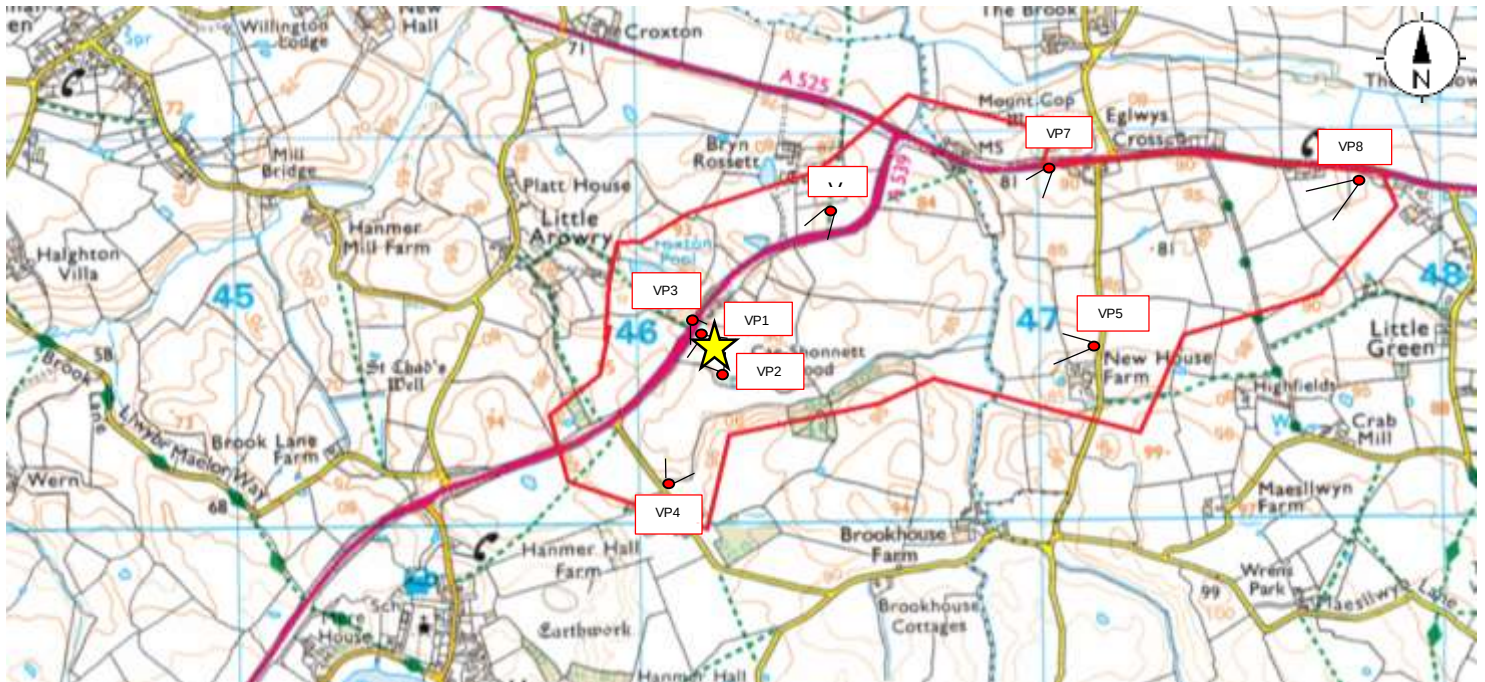
There will be no direct impacts on any landscape designations within the area. This is due to all known landscape designations within the study area falling far enough away from the site boundaries, that they will not be affected by the scheme of works. One possible indirect impact would be a slight increase in footfall from the people at the site within landscape designations. These are, however, ultimately likely to be minimal.

6.7 Effects on Visual Receptors

Due to the location of the site and the vegetation, there are very few visual receptors for this project. These are mainly residents of the nearby farms and country properties, as well as those that are utilising nearby roads and footpaths. It is worth noting that the site is not visible from any public features such as roads and footpaths.

The following sections assess each individual viewpoint and the overall impacts of the works.

Figure 2: A map showing the viewpoints shown below (red dots) within the ZTV for the study site (red outline). The study site is shown by the yellow star.



Viewpoint 1 – Taken from the northern corner of the proposed development site

**Baseline Description:**

This viewpoint is situated in the northern corner of the field, with visual receptors located behind (in the road). These receptors will only have brief visibility of the site, but this is shown in Viewpoint 3. This viewpoint illustrates the current habitats on site to be worked on.

Predicted Change:

The development site will be visible from this viewpoint.

Susceptibility:	Medium – Undue consequences may arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – There is little evidence to show that the site is of any use for the local community from this viewpoint.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low-to-Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Medium-to-Low
Scale:	Medium – Partial alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Low
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	SLIGHT

Viewpoint 2 – Taken from the southern end of the field.

**Baseline Description:**

This viewpoint is situated at the southern end of the field to be developed. There are no receptors to this viewpoint, but has been included to illustrate the current baseline habitats and the proposed works.

Predicted Change:

The development site will not be visible from this viewpoint.

Susceptibility:	Medium – Undue consequences may arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – There is little evidence to show that the site is of any use for the local community from this viewpoint.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low-to-Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Medium-to-Low
Scale:	Medium – Partial alteration to key elements, features, qualities or characteristics.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Low
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	SLIGHT

Viewpoint 3 – Taken from the other side of the A539 to the north of the site.

**Baseline Description:**

This viewpoint is situated adjacent to the A539, to the north of the site. The visual receptors here would be the road users as they travel through the area.

Very limited visibility of the site will be possible here, but the impacts are thought to be minimal due to the adjacent road being National Speed Limit, leading to by passers getting a short glimpse (less than 1 second) of the site. The remaining hedgerows with intermixed trees will screen the site.

Predicted Change:

The development site will be visible from this viewpoint, but only very briefly for road users.

Susceptibility:	Low – Undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – The landscape at the site is of minimal value to the local community.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low
Scale:	Small – Minor alterations to the key elements will occur, but the baseline will be largely unchanged.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Negligible
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	MINIMAL

Viewpoint 4 – Taken from the south-west of the development site, adjacent to Hanmer Hall Farm.



Baseline Description:

This viewpoint is situated along the road adjacent to Hanmer Hall Farm. The visual receptors here would be the occasional traffic using the single-carriageway and the residents along this road, namely Hanmer Hall Farm.

The development site is screened by both topography, agricultural barns, hedgerows and trees that line the roadside.

This viewpoint was taken from a gate to enter a field beside Hanmer Hall Farm.

Predicted Change:

The development site will not be visible from the receptors, but is visible viewpoint at the field entrance.

Susceptibility:	Low – Undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – The landscape at the site is of minimal value to the local community.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low
Scale:	Small – Minor alterations to the key elements will occur, but the baseline will be largely unchanged.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Negligible
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	MINIMAL

Viewpoint 5 – Taken from the east of the proposed development site.



Baseline Description:

This viewpoint is situated to the east of the site, adjacent to New House Farm. This is to illustrate the visibility of the receptor within the farm.

Due to topography and vegetation, including Cae Shonnett Wood, the site will not be visible here.

Predicted Change:

The development site will not be visible from this viewpoint.

Susceptibility:	Low – Undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – The landscape at the site is of minimal value to the local community.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low
Scale:	Small – Minor alterations to the key elements will occur, but the baseline will be largely unchanged.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Negligible
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	MINIMAL

Viewpoint 6 – Taken from the north of the site to illustrate the viewpoint of the public footpath and the historic site.



Baseline Description:

This viewpoint is situated on the A539 to the north of the site, with this illustrating the visibility from the road, public footpath and the historical site. The receptors will be residents of Bryn Rossett, users of the road and pedestrians on the public footpath.

The proposed works site is not visible from this viewpoint due to the topography and landform.

Predicted Change:

The development site will not be visible from this viewpoint.

Susceptibility:	Low – Undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – The landscape at the site is of minimal value to the local community.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low
Scale:	Small – Minor alterations to the key elements will occur, but the baseline will be largely unchanged.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Negligible
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	MINIMAL

Viewpoint 7 – Taken from the north-east of the site

Baseline Description:

This viewpoint is situated to the north-east of the site. The receptors here would be residents, public on footpaths, users of the road and people at Mount Cop Motte.

The site will not be visible from this viewpoint due to the landform and vegetation.

Predicted Change:

The development site will not be visible from this viewpoint.

Susceptibility:	Low – Undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – The landscape at the site is of minimal value to the local community.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low
Scale:	Small – Minor alterations to the key elements will occur, but the baseline will be largely unchanged.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Negligible
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	MINIMAL

Viewpoint 8 – Taken from the front of the adjacent residential property

Baseline Description:

This viewpoint is situated from the visual receptors for the residential dwellings located on the A525.

The proposed work site will not be visible due to the landform and vegetation.

Predicted Change:

The development site will not be visible from this viewpoint.

Susceptibility:	Low – Undue consequences are unlikely to arise from the development.
Landscape Value:	Limited – The landscape at the site is of minimal value to the local community.
Land Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Negligible
Visual Sensitivity (worked out by susceptibility and landscape value):	Low
Scale:	Small – Minor alterations to the key elements will occur, but the baseline will be largely unchanged.
Duration:	Permanent – At present, the works are not planned to be reversed.
Extent:	Limited – The extent of the development will be felt in a very small area.
Magnitude (worked out by scale, duration and extent):	Negligible
Significance (worked out by sensitivity and magnitude):	MINIMAL

7 Mitigation

The effects for the proposed development will be of a minimal scale and visibility of the site is possible from a few receptors in the form of road users. This is of a very limited scale and impacts will be negligible.

Increased screening can be proposed through the inclusion of tree planting within the soft landscaping scheme of the site. However, it is deemed that this is a possibility rather than a necessity due to the limited visibility of the site.

The species recommended to plant should be of local provenance and similar to the species already identified on site. Please refer to the Tree Survey and Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for the species currently present.

8 Summary and Conclusions

Elite Ecology were commissioned by CL Edwards and Son to undertake a landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) of the proposed campsite at the land situated adjacent to the A539, Hanmer. The results of this assessment are presented in this report and will be submitted to the local planning authority as a part of a planning application for the proposed development.

A landscape and visual impact assessment concentrates on key landscape and visual issues, including impacts of development on the landscape resource and impacts on the visual amenity. Landscape impacts are those that occur upon the landscape character and resource, whereas visual impacts are those that arise from changes in the appearance of the landscape and have a resulting impact on visual amenity.

The baseline or existing conditions has been considered, including identifying the sensitivity of the landscape and visual amenity. The impacts of the proposed development have been considered, and the magnitude of change as a result of the proposed development identified for both the landscape and the visual amenity. The significance of this impact is provided, and for the purposes of this assessment any moderate or major impact is considered to be significant.

The impacts on the visual amenity as a result of the proposed development range from negligible to low, and have not been considered significant from any representative viewpoints.

In conclusion, the overall impact of the proposed works on the landscape and visual amenity is considered to be slight, principally due to the limited visibility of the site, with this being brief on the adjacent public highways as people drive by. From the studies undertaken, it is clear that the effects on the landscape will be highly localised to within close proximity of the site, due to the vegetation and landform around the site. The planting of additional trees along the site boundaries will help to screen the site further, although this is an optional enhancement as opposed to a necessary measure.

9 Appendices

Appendix A: Site Plans

Appendix B: Additional Site Photographs

Appendix A: Site Plans



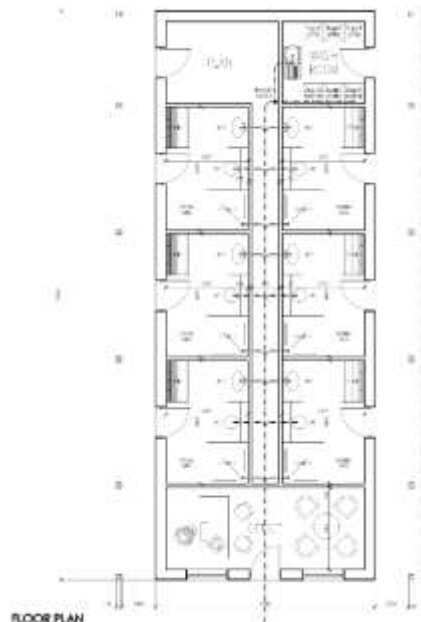
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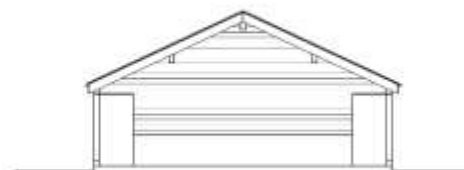
EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION



FLOOR PLAN



WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION

BOWER EDLESTON
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PROPOSED SHOWER & TOILET BLOCK
FLOOR PLAN & ELEVATIONS

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Appendix B: Additional Site Photographs

Plate 1: An overview photograph of the site showing the arable land.



Plate 2: A view of a section of hedgerow showing the aforementioned species.



Plate 3: A photo of the pond, believed to support Great Crested Newts.



Plate 4: A photo of an oak tree on site with potential bat roosting features



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Should any equipment be damaged or lost on site at the fault of the client(s), then Elite Ecology withholds the right to charge 100% above the current market value for that exact product or the nearest similar product.

The survey results purport the current status of the site and its potential for protected species utilisation at the time of surveying. It should not be viewed as a complete list of the possible flora and fauna species that could be using the site at different times of the year.

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No reliance should be made on any such comments in relation to the structural integrity of the features located on the surveyed site. All information within the report is based solely on evidence that has been found on site during the service provided. No individual opinion or inference will be made other than that of the suitably qualified ecologist appointed to the project.