

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT APPRAISAL

**HILLOCK LANE,
GRESFORD,
WREXHAM**

PREPARED BY TPM LANDSCAPE LTD

FOR

ICENI

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1.0 CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION - PROJECT DESCRIPTION

TPM Landscape were commissioned by Icenl in September 2019 to prepare a Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal (LVIA) for land off Hillock Road, Gresford, located approximately 4.5km to the north-east of Wrexham; this will be referred to as the proposal site throughout the document. This document is in support of a planning application for a proposed residential development and landscaping. The LVIA will consider the baseline for both landscape and visual amenity and will seek to identify the sensitivity of each before considering the change that proposed development may introduce. Both the landscape and visual impact of the proposed residential development will be assessed and a strategy of mitigation planting or other methods will be explored where relevant to reduce identified impacts.

The site visit was undertaken in early October 2019 when trees are with leaf. It is understood that the assessed effects to the visual resource are likely to be greater during the winter months due to the trees being without leaf. Where these are particularly relevant this has been considered and appraised in the assessment.

1.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies immediately to the south of Gresford and approximately 4.5km to the north-east of Wrexham. The site covers one field and part of another field to the south. Native hedgerows run along the eastern boundary and part of the northern boundary, no field boundary runs along the southern site boundary and the western boundary comprises of stock proof fencing with the odd tree. A stock proof fence with remnant hedgerow and hedgerow trees runs from east to west within the southern part of the site. Currently the site comprises of pastoral farmland (see aerial image, Figure 3).

The topography of the site is generally flat ranging between 75m AOD from the southern boundary and 77m AOD at the north-east corner of the site. A public right of way footpath route runs across the site in a north to south direction connecting with a wider footpath network to the south (see OS map, Figure 2).

The proposal site is irregular in shape and bounded on the northern side by the local road of Hillock Lane and the back gardens of residential properties off Hillock Lane. Further properties are located north of the site off Hillock Lane and Stancliffe Avenue. A small electric substation neighbours the north-east corner of the site with electric overhead lines running along part of the northern boundary and along the eastern site boundary. Pastoral fields are located to the east, south and west of the proposal site.

1.3 STUDY AREA

The local roads were driven and public footpath networks explored to determine the receptors to be appraised and the extents of the visual envelope. The visual envelope is contained by built form to the north edge of settlement and hedgerows, local landform, trees, built form and woodland to the east, south and west. A study area of approximately 1.5km radius has been considered from the centre of the site. The extent of the study area is illustrated in Figure 2 Study Area and Location Plan. The topography of the study area is illustrated in Section 4, Figure 8.

1.4 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The development proposals seek Outline Planning Approval for a residential development for approximately 109 dwellings, with access and landscaping. The application reduced in number following a Pre Application process which resulted in the loss of some units and some redesign of the layout to incorporate a larger area of open space in the centre of the development, increased open space flanking the central footpath, and the houses set back behind an area of open space which fronts Hillock Lane.

For the purpose of this appraisal it is assumed that the proposed residential dwellings will be predominantly 2 storeys high, a similar scale and massing to the adjacent residential areas and be constructed from materials appropriate to the local setting and vernacular.

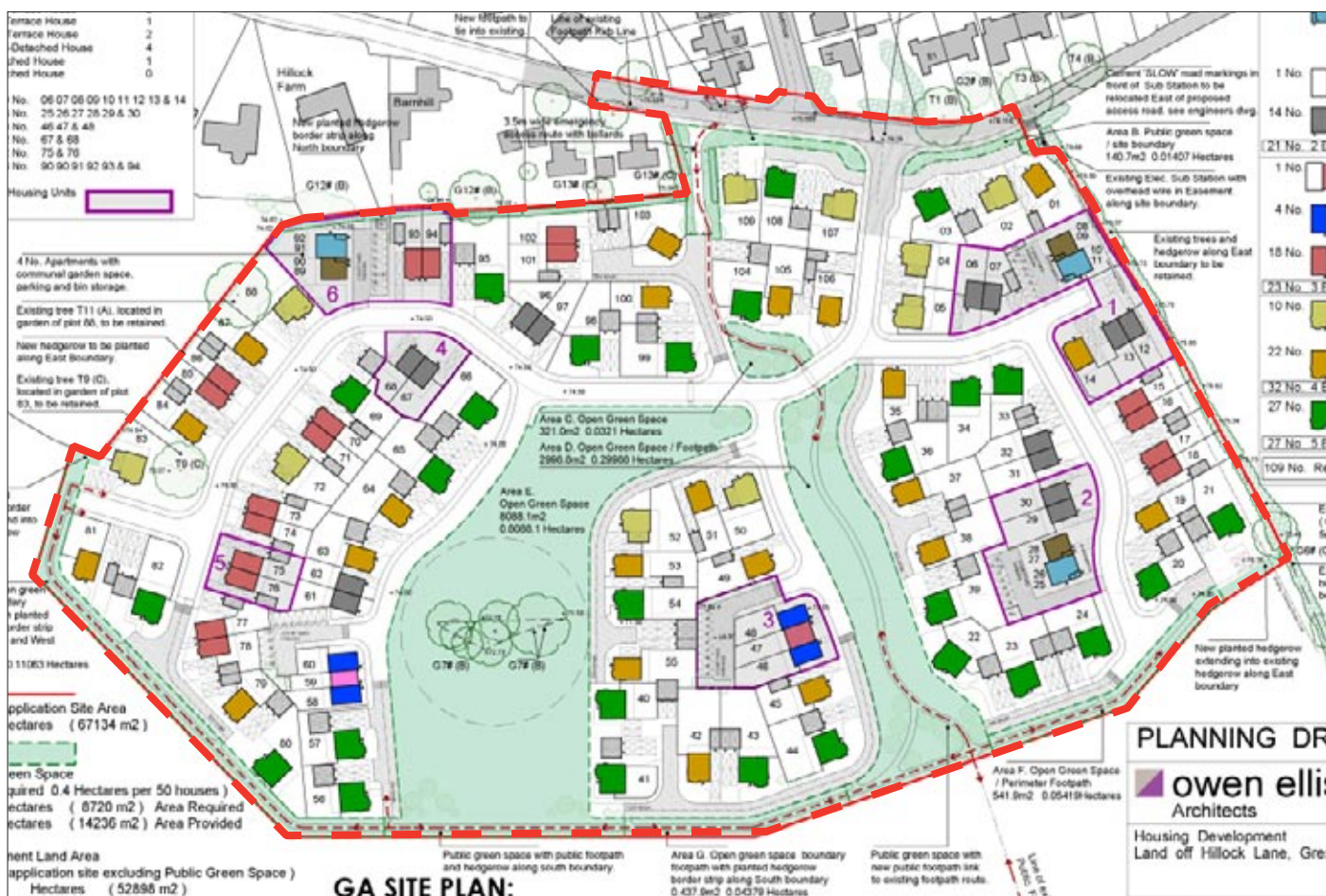
Landscape mitigation proposals have been proposed to help reduce identified landscape or visual impacts which are summarised in section 8, and illustrated in Figure 15. These potential impacts and the mitigation strategy proposed to alleviate any impacts are

described in section 8 and 9.

1.5 DESIGNATIONS

The proposal site is not subject to any national landscape designations such as a National Park or AONB, however the site is located within the local planning policy designation Green Barrier and within close proximity to the local designations called

Figure 1. Illustrative layout



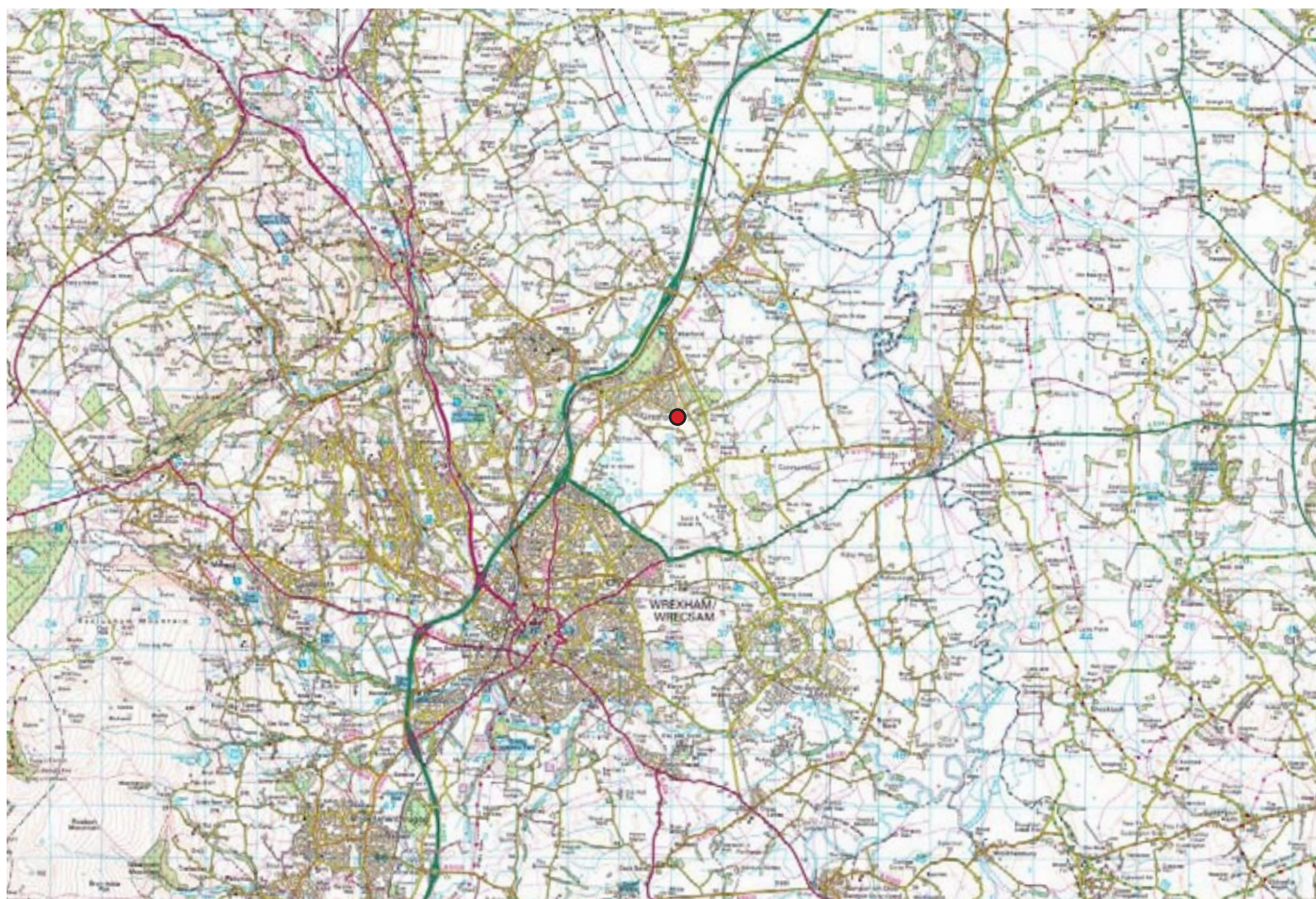


Figure 2. Study Area and Location Plans

● Proposed Site Location



Proposal Site Boundary
Study Area Boundary

Visual Envelope

Figure 3. Site Aerial Image



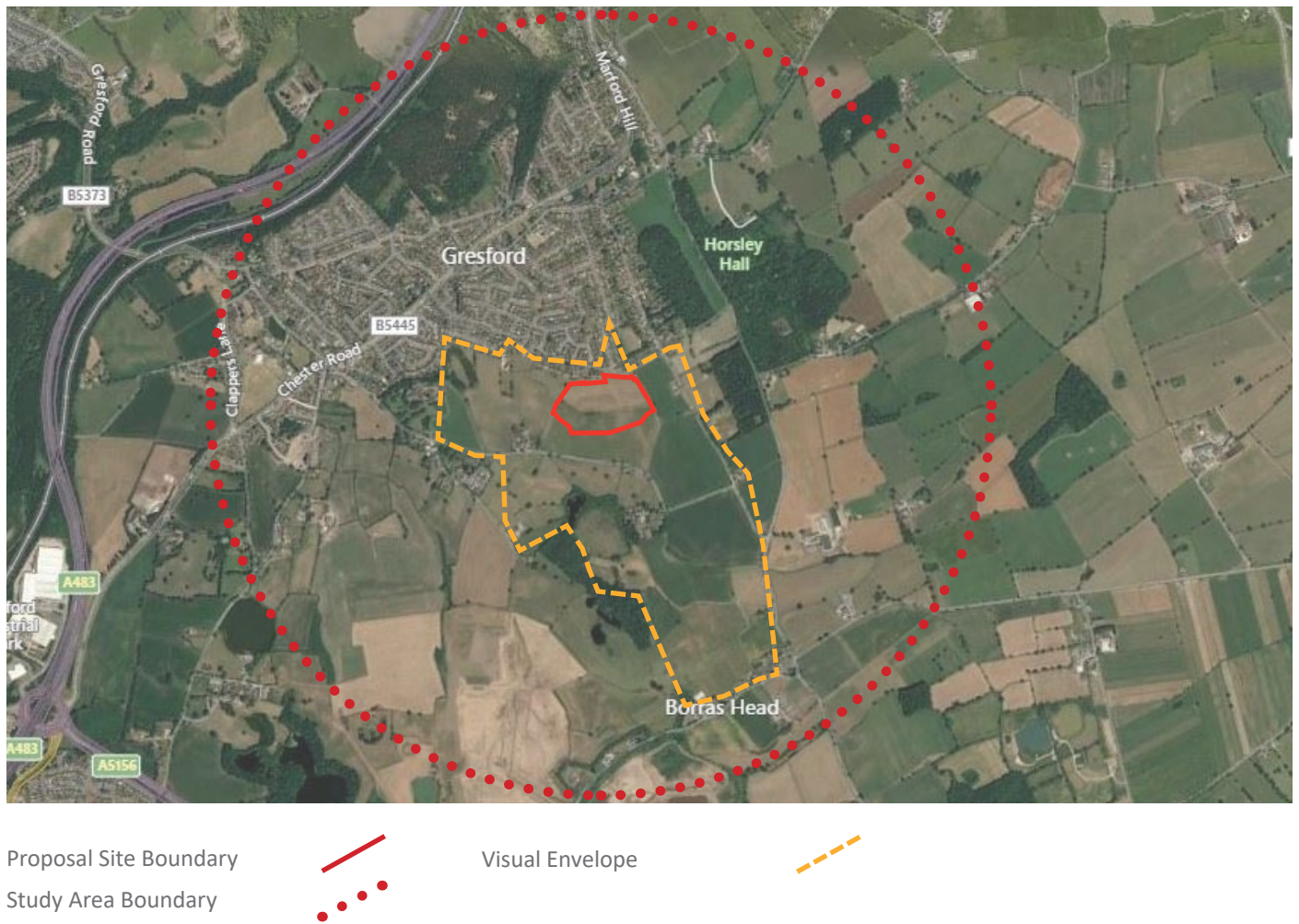
Proposal Site Boundary

Figure 4. Local Context Aerial Image



Proposal Site Boundary

Figure 5. Wider Scale Aerial Image



2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 METHODOLOGY

The site was visited and the surrounding road network driven. Positive and detracting elements in the landscape were recorded, as was the general land use and quality of the site. Viewpoints were identified based on public viewpoints (public footpaths), private viewpoints (residential properties) and key distant viewpoints to determine the wider impact on the landscape and where development would have the potential to affect the quality and character of existing views and in consideration of the nature of the proposed development. A study area of approximately 1.5km was assessed in consideration of the likely visual envelope. Potential longer distance views were also considered. A photographic record of the study area, surrounding context and important views/character were recorded.

The methodology seeks to use recognised, published industry standards and techniques to identify and describe a landscape and visual baseline and ascribe a sensitivity to these landscape and visual receptors which may be altered through the introduction of the proposed development. Landscape and visual impacts are considered separately although the conclusion on sensitivity and impact will have regard to both these related areas of study and proposals made for the mitigation of that impact.

The magnitude of change brought about through the proposed development is considered alongside the level of sensitivity for each landscape area or receptor and the level of landscape or visual effects is expressed as a combination of these two elements.

The methodology for landscape character appraisal and visual appraisal is summarised in sections 2.2 and 2.3, refer to APPENDIX 2 for tables 2.4 to 2.12.

The appraisal has been based on guidelines and information provided in the following publications:

- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage, 2002)
- Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (The Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage). Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity
- An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment (Natural England, 2014)
- National Landscape Character NLCA13 Deeside and Wrexham (Natural Resources Wales, 2014)
- National Landscape Character NLCA14 Maelor (Natural Resources Wales, 2014)
- Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance (Wrexham County Borough Council, 2007)
- LANDMAP (Natural Resources Wales, 2019) <http://landmap-maps.naturalresources.wales/>
- LANDMAP Methodology Visual and Sensory 2016 Natural Resources Wales
- LANDMAP Methodology Historic Landscape 2016 Natural Resources Wales
- LANDMAP Methodology Cultural Landscape 2016 Natural Resources Wales
- LANDMAP Methodology Geological Landscape 2016 Natural Resources Wales
- LANDMAP Methodology Landscape Habitats 2016 Natural Resources Wales
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 3rd edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013)
- Visual Representation of Development Proposals Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (Landscape Institute, 2019)

2.2 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER APPRAISAL

A desktop study and site survey of existing landscape policies, planning designations and character appraisals was undertaken and an appraisal made of the landscape character of the surrounding area and the proposal sites value in landscape terms within this character area.

To determine the effects of development on the landscape three different key aspects or receptors are considered:

Elements: Individual elements within the landscape, which are quantifiable and include features such as hills, valleys, woods, trees, hedges and ponds;

Characteristics: Elements or combinations of elements that make a particular contribution to the character of the area i.e. scenic quality, tranquillity or wildness;

Character: A combination of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

These features combine to give an indication of the sensitivity of the landscape and its ability to accept change. In addition the landscape condition, value and quality are considered and appraised as part of this judgement.

To assist in the appraisal of the sensitivity of the landscape resource each landscape encountered is considered against the criteria set out in Tables 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 (Appendix 2). The tables identify the principal factors considered when assessing the sensitivity of the landscape in relation to the proposed development.

2.3 VISUAL APPRAISAL

Visual appraisal relates to the change to views as a result of development, and the overall effects on visual amenity.

The sensitivity of visual receptors depends upon:

- Location of the viewpoint
- Context of the view
- Activity of the receptor
- Frequency and duration of the view

The criteria used to assess the visual effects on selected viewpoints included:

- The sensitivity and type of receptor (Table 2.9)
- The degree of visibility of the proposal site from the viewpoint (Table 2.10)
- The magnitude of change (Table 2.11)
- The effects of development on the view (pre-mitigation) (Table 2.12)
- The effects of development on the view (post-mitigation) (Table 2.12)

An additional consideration for the sensitivity of a view or views is the quality of the view where a subjective opinion is considered alongside the objective factors. (Table 2.9)

The appraisal of visual effects describes:

- The changes in the character of the available views resulting from the development and the changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptor.
- The appraisal process mirrors that of landscape effects in that it requires the collation of baseline information relating to the nature and type of views and the receptors which will receive them. As with landscape effects, visual impacts are determined by considering the magnitude and nature of change evaluated in consideration of the sensitivity of the receptor. (Table 2.11)
- The magnitude of change to the view will depend on numerous factors including the extent and nature of the current view, the distance to the proposed development, the time of year and whether other elements intervene in the view such as vegetation or moving traffic

2.4 PHOTOGRAPHY/ VISUALISATIONS

Type 1 visualisations in reference to Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (2019) by the Landscape Institute have been produced on A3 sheets with accompanying contextual photographs and visual assessment tables (See Appendix 1).

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

The overall planning context in relation to the proposed development is explored in greater detail within the separate Planning Statement that accompanies the planning application. The following provides a summary in relation to landscape and visual matters.

3.1 NATIONAL CONTEXT

Planning Policy Wales (PPW 2018)

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) published December 2018 sets out land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. PPW is supplemented by Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and Policy Clarification Letters which together provide the National Planning Policy Framework for Wales.

The proposal site is located within land identified as Green Barrier which is a local planning designation that possesses the same characteristics and purposes of formal Green Belts, except in their long-term permanency. PPW emphasises managing settlement form through Green Belts and Green Wedges. PPW states that ‘the main aim of Green belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence’ (para 3.61 - page 39).

Green Belt

PPW states ‘The purpose of Green Belts is to:

- prevent the coalescence of large towns and cities with other settlements;
- manage urban form through controlled expansion of urban areas;
- assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- protect the setting of an urban area; and
- assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land’ (para 3.63 - pages 39 and 40).

PPW recognises special characteristics of places including the historic environment (section 6.1), green infrastructure (section 6.2), and landscape (section 6.3).

PPW emphasises the importance of the historic environment (para 6.1.1 - page 123), integrating green infrastructure into development (para 6.2.5 - pages 129 and 130), and protecting and enhancing special characteristics of the landscape (para 6.3.3 - page 131).

Technical Advice Notes (TANs)

TAN 12 Design

TAN 12 refers to appraising context and states ‘In many cases an appraisal of the local context will highlight distinctive patterns of development or landscape where the intention will be to sustain character. Appraisal is equally important in areas where patterns of development have failed to respond to context in the past. In these areas appraisal should point towards solutions which reverse the trend.’ (Para 4.5 - page 13).

TAN 12 considers that design solutions following an appraisal of character context can influence landscape design, scale, amount, layout of the development and appearance.

Welsh Government Circulars and Policy Clarification Letters

There are no Welsh Government Circulars and Policy Clarification Letters of relevance to landscape and visual matters.

3.2 LOCAL POLICY - WREXHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

The Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 1996 - 2011 was adopted by Wrexham County Borough Council in 2005. Wrexham County Borough Council is currently preparing the Local Development Plan (LDP) which will replace the currently adopted Unitary Development Plan.

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011 (Currently Adopted)

Strategic policies relevant to this assessment include:

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 maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated with the existing transport network to help reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.

Specific policies relevant to this assessment include:

Green Barriers - Policy EC1

Policy EC1 states that *'Within Green Barriers, development will only be granted planning permission if it is for agriculture, forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and other uses of land which maintain the openness of the Green Barrier and do not conflict with the purpose of including land within it'* (page 17).

Hedgerow, Trees and Woodland - Policy EC4

Policy EC4 states that *'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'* (page 18).

Special Landscape Areas - Policy EC5

Policy EC5 states that *'Within Special Landscape Areas, priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Development, other than for agriculture, small-scale farm-based and other rural enterprises, and essential operational development by utility service providers, will be strictly controlled. Development will be required to conform to a high standard of design and landscaping, and special attention will be paid to minimising its visual impact both from nearby and distant viewpoints'* (page 19).

3.3 APPRAISAL OF THE GREEN BARRIERS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL SITE

The proposal site is located in Green Barrier land which almost entirely surrounds the majority of Gresford settlement except to the east (see figure 6).

Wrexham Council planning policy states that *'there are several instances where existing settlements come into close proximity and there is a need to maintain a belt of countryside free from development. The purposes of Green Barrier are as follows:*

- i) to prevent the coalescence of urban areas and villages with other settlements;*
- ii) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- iii) to protect the setting of urban areas and villages;*
- iv) to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.'* (Wrexham UDP 1996-2011, para 5.2 - page 17).

The proposal site would result in the southern extension of Gresford village and some encroachment of the countryside however the proposal site would not cause the coalescence of Gresford with any neighbouring settlement. This is appraised in section 5 Landscape Character. The existing settlement has a harsh urban edge when it abuts Hillock Lane, which has scope to be improved in order to integrate the settlement in its landscape. Any extension of settlement into Green Barrier will need to have a landscape interface with the countryside in order to protect the setting. The proposal site is greenfield land and would not involve the recycling of derelict or urban land however the proposal would encourage the widening of the narrow road of Hillock Lane.

3.4 APPRAISAL OF SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL SITE

Special Landscape Areas in Wrexham include pockets of high value landscapes which contribute to the setting, amenity, and character of local settlements and comprise of attractive and sensitive environments in their own right within or adjacent to built up areas and farmland.

The proposal site is not designated as a Special Landscape Area and is located approximately 140m to the west and north of the nearest Special Landscape Areas. It is worth noting that Gresford settlement is almost entirely surrounded by Special Landscape Areas apart from areas to the immediate south and west. Should a flexing of the settlement boundary be required to allow for some expansion of Gresford, then land in the vicinity of the proposal site to the south and west of Gresford is less sensitive than land to the north and east.

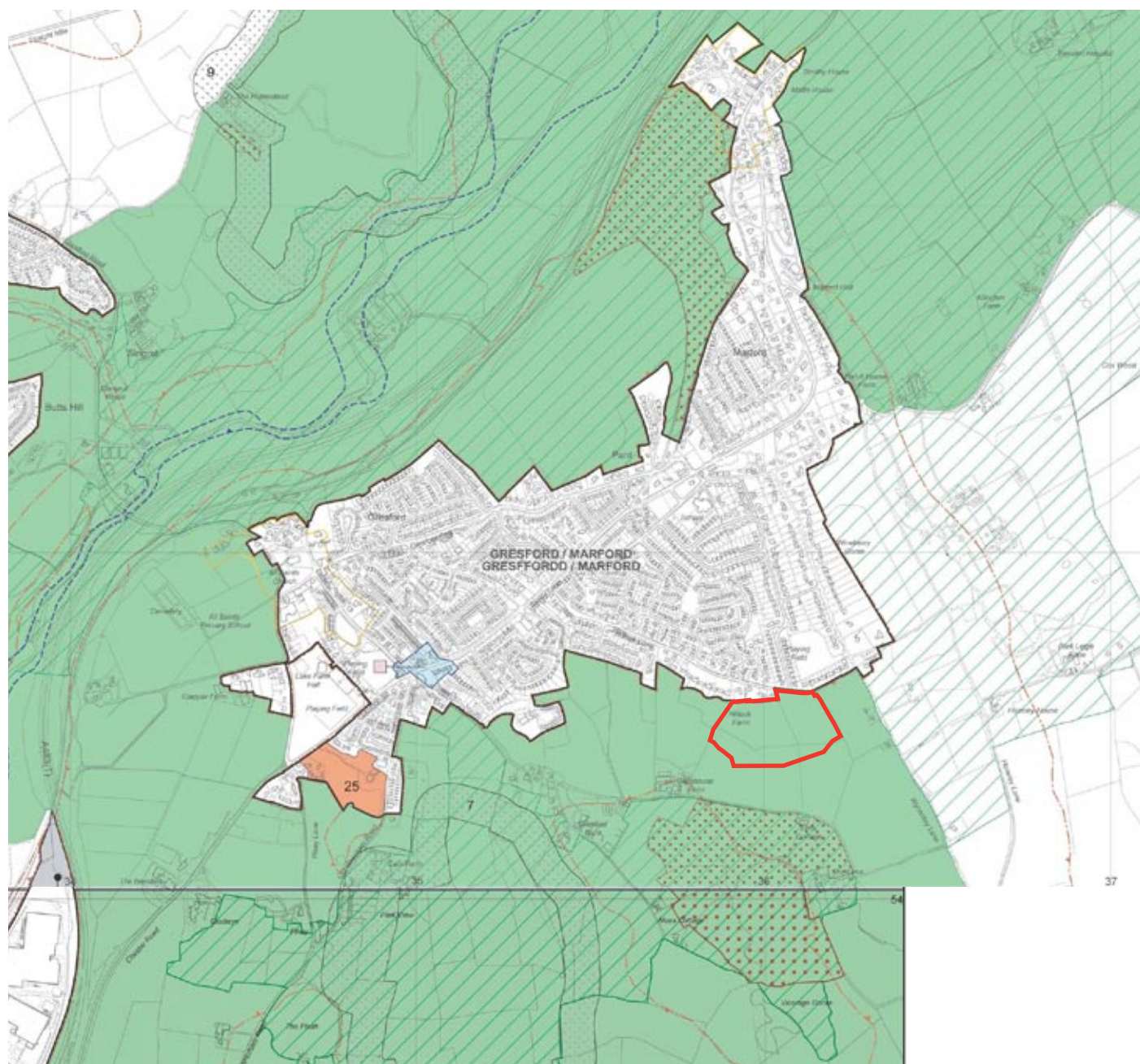


Figure 6. Extract from the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-20011 (Currently adopted) Urban and Rural Village Inset 1 (Maps 2) and Inset 4 (Map 3).

KEY

	Proposal Site Boundary		Conservation Area / Ardal Cadwraeth - EC7, EC8
	County Boundary / Ffin y Sir		Development and Flood Risk / Datblygiad a Perygl Llif - EC12
	Settlement Limit / Ffin Anheddiad - PS1		Housing / Tai - H1
	District Shopping Centre / Canolfan Siopa Cylch - S5		Railway Station / Gorsaf Rheilffordd - T3
	Employment / Gwaith - E1		Protection of Mineral Resources / Diogelu Adnoddau Mwynau - MW9
	Commercial Offices / Swyddfeydd Masnachol - E7		Minerals Buffer Zone / Cylchfeydd Rhagod Mwynau - MW11
	Green Barrier / Ffin Gwyrdd - EC1		
	Special Landscape Area / Ardal Tirlun Arbennig - EC5		
	Biodiversity Conservation / Cadwraeth Bioamrywiaeth - EC6		

4.0 SITE CONTEXT

The proposed development site lies to the immediate south of Gresford village and is located on the fringe of the urban area. Hillock Lane runs along part of the northern site boundary and is a narrow lane with properties set back by bound gardens or driveways with garden trees and vegetation. The junction of Stancliffe Avenue is also located opposite the northern boundary with a streetscape of 2 storey properties with small gardens and driveways. Other local roads in the local vicinity include Wynnstay Lane approximately 135m to the east and Vicarage Lane approximately 130m to the south. Farms and individual cottages are sparsely scattered along the landscape off country lanes. The site is surrounded by a public right of way (PRoW) network (see Figure 7) with footpath PRoW MAR/5 running through the site from north to south allowing pedestrian access from Hillock Lane to Vicarage Lane. The wider landscape is gently undulating with ground declining to the north and east and land inclining to the north-west and south-west (see Figure 8). A distant elevated skyline to the west and north-west comprises of Hope Mountain and Brynmally Park located approximately 6.8km from the site. The wider landscape has a predominantly rural agricultural character comprising of mixed farming, hedgerows, trees and woodland. Rural urban settlement is also a notable characteristic of the local area. Key features within the landscape include Alyn Waters Country Park approximately 2.5km to the west of the site and Wat's Dyke approximately 2.2km south-west of the site.

A selection of photographs are included in this section to illustrate the site context and characteristics of Gresford and the surrounding rural and urban areas, see Figure 9 for the locations of site context photos. An assessment of visual amenity and specific visual receptors is included in Section 7 with representative views located in Appendix 1.



Figure 7. Public Access

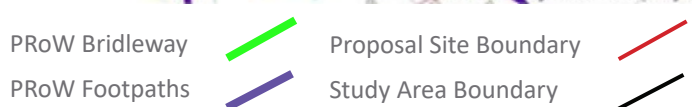




Figure 8. Topography

Proposal Site Boundary
Study Area Boundary





Figure 9. Site Context Photos - Location Plan



Photo looking west from within site from PRow footpath (MAR/ 5) towards wider rural landscape. View of agricultural farmland bound by stock proof fencing, hedgerows and trees. The elevated rolling skyline is of Hope Mountain visible in the distance.



Photo looking north from within site along PRoW footpath (MAR/ 5). View of the site with pastoral grassland bound by hedgerow with a footpath running towards Hillock Lane. Properties are visible along Hillock Lane and from Stancliffe Avenue.



Photo looking north along Stancliffe Avenue of local settlement character and typical street scene of detached properties set back by small enclosed gardens or driveways.



Photo looking north-east along Hillock Lane of 2 storey semi-detached properties set back from a narrow country road by large front gardens with hedging.

5



Photo looking west from PRow footpath (GRE/ 10) of Gresford urban fringe that is partially screened by mature scrubby vegetation and trees.

6

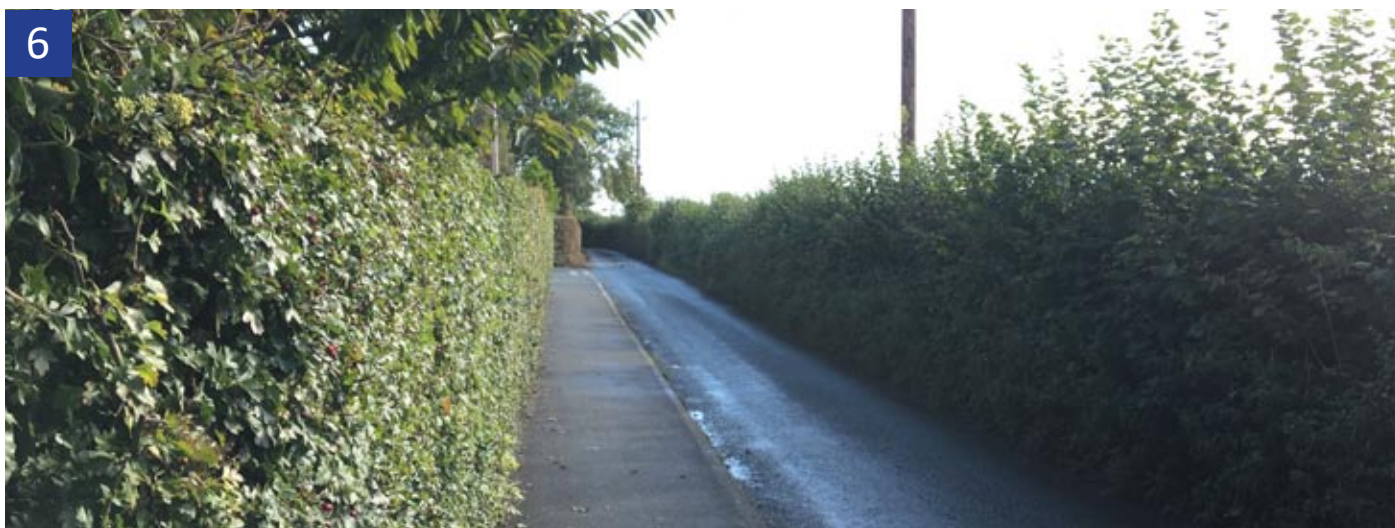


Photo looking east along the narrow section of Hillock Lane with mature hedgerow along part of the northern boundary of the site.

7



Photo looking south-west towards Special Landscape Area and the Elms Cottage to the south of Vicarage Lane. View comprises of undulating farmland, hedgerows, trees, woodland and scattered built form.

8



Photo looking north-east from Wynnstay Lane and footpath MAR/4 towards Special Landscape Area. View comprises of grazing farmland, hedgerows, trees and woodland.

5.0 LANDSCAPE CHARACTER BASE LINE

5.1 EXTRACTS OF NATIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA

Natural Resources Wales's National Landscape Character Area (NLCA) are defined at a broad landscape scale throughout Wales that describe 48 individual character areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of regionally distinct natural, cultural and perceptual characteristics. The proposal site area falls within two National Landscape Character Areas: profile 13 - Deeside and Wrexham and National Landscape Character Area profile 14 - Maelor. The text is extracted from the relevant national landscape character area assessment to understand the characteristics of the two NLCAs and whether the character area descriptions are relevant in the context of the proposal site.

5.2 EXTRACT OF NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA: NLCA 13 DEESIDE AND WREXHAM

The following is a summary description of the character area, extracted from the National Landscape Character Area profile 13 - Deeside and Wrexham that the proposal site is located within.

Summary Description

A border area, extending from the mouth of the Dee along the coast as far as Point of Ayr, and inland as far south as the Ceiriog Valley. It includes several settlements and centres of population, the principal being the towns of Chirk, Wrexham and its main satellites Ruabon, and Rhosllanerchrugog in the south; Mold, Flint and Holywell in the north and west, and the part-industrial, part-suburban centres of Queensferry, Connah's Quay, Mostyn Docks and Talacre on the shores of the Dee Estuary. Elsewhere, many settlements, like Buckley, have grown out of the linear expansion and coalescence of pre-industrial roadside villages and hamlets.

Historically, much of this area has formed part of the hinterland of Chester. The greater part of the lowland around the mouth of the Dee was reclaimed from the sea in the 18th century, though the former large expanse of tidal water is recalled in the Welsh name for Hawarden, Penarlâg, 'the hill above the lake'. This area also became heavily industrialised from the establishment of Shotton steelworks in 1895, though this was built of a long-established tradition of engineering and metalworking all along the coast, itself reflecting a long history of mining and the availability of water-borne transport. The Wrexham area similarly industrialised early on, taking advantage of its resources of coal, iron-ore, clay and limestone, as well as free-flowing streams to turn industrial water-wheels.

In recent years, the area as a whole has become an economic hub of the Welsh and regional English economy with its gaze more towards Merseyside than to the rural areas to the west. However it would be wrong to see this area as a purely industrial and commercial landscape. It includes some attractive traditional architecture and countryside too, indeed its early industrial history has bequeathed some important monuments such as the Bersham ironworks near Wrexham.

Key Characteristics

- Lowland, foothills and levels - sloping down to the lower Dee and Dee Estuary. Carboniferous Coal Measures interspersed with outcrops of Millstone Grit, Holywell shales and Cefn-y-Fedw sandstones. Glacial till, fluvio-glacial and river terrace drift overlay in parts of the valley floor, giving rise to localised gentle land form variation.
- A single large river, the Dee, traverses the area. The Dee opens out into a broad estuary with tidal sand and mud flats. A number of minor rivers dissect the landscape, for example, the Alyn and Eitha, and associated streams.
- A broad flat flood plain adjacent to the Dee Estuary – with wide open views to Wirral
- Narrow, incised, wooded tributary valleys – many running down from the west.
- Mixed pasture and some arable - and farm woodland cover.
- Archaeology - variety of historic sites indicate the former strategic importance of the coastal route and the turbulent history of the Marchlands, including Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke. Late Medieval parklands and ecclesiastical / funerary sites.
- Urban settlements - a strongly settled character is apparent in the central and southern parts of the area, with the relatively large, almost linked settlements of Holywell-Connah's Quay-Mold-Wrexham-Ruabon.
- An industrial character - evident in the line of coalesced settlements at Connah's Quay and Holywell, associated both with the Chester to Holyhead railway line, mining and large scale power generation and industrial plants. Include landmark scale structures such as Broughton aircraft factory, Shotton Steel works and Connah's Quay power station. Industry tends to dwarf historic settlement and features e.g. Flint and its castle.
- Small settlements – outside urban areas, compact villages associated with landed estates and isolated farmsteads, or coalesced ribbon developments and encroachment upon commons, which are the legacy of the former coal and lead mining industries.
- Culturally many connections to Chester and Merseyside.

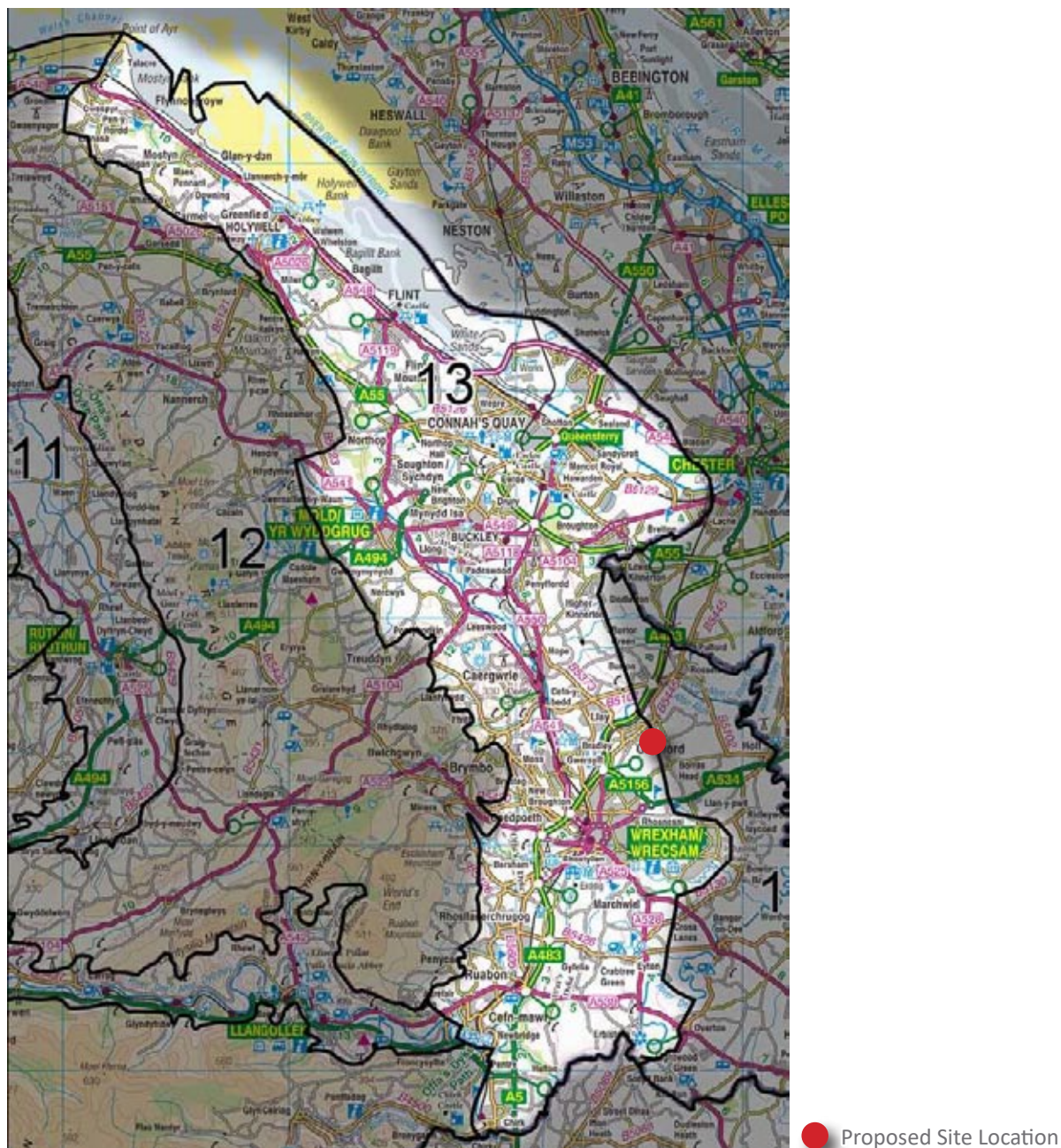


Figure 10. Extract of NLCA 13: Deeside and Wrexham

5.3 SUMMARY OF NLCA 13 IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROPOSAL SITE

Distinctive characteristics within NLCA 13 that are particularly desirable within the wider area however are not relevant to the site or study area include:

- *Lowland, foothills and levels - sloping down to the lower Dee and Dee Estuary*
- *A single large river, the Dee, traverses the area*
- *Archaeology - variety of historic sites indicate the former strategic importance of the coastal route and the turbulent history of the Marchlands, including Offa's Dyke and Wat's Dyke. Late Medieval parklands and ecclesiastical / funerary sites.*

Characteristics of the NLCA 13 description noted within the study area include:

- *Mixed pasture and some arable - and farm woodland cover.*
- *Urban settlements - a strongly settled character is apparent in the central and southern parts of the area.*
- *Small settlements - outside urban areas, compact villages associated with landed estates and isolated farmsteads, or coalesced ribbon developments and encroachment upon commons, which are the legacy of the former coal and lead mining industries.*

5.4 EXTRACT OF NATIONAL CHARACTER AREA: NLCA 14 MAELOR

The following is a summary description of the character area, extracted from the National Landscape Character Area profile 14 - Maelor that the proposal site is located within.

Summary Description

The area includes 'English Maelor', that short sleeve of Welsh territory protruding into Cheshire Plain west of the Dee and parts of 'Welsh Maelor' to the east. It is an area that in many respects belongs to the border counties of Shropshire and Cheshire. It has seen centuries of the ebb and flow of English and Welsh influences, but topographically, it is very uncharacteristic of Wales, with little high ground on either side of the tortuously meandering Dee that crosses it, and it is no surprise that most (though by no means all) of the place names are English. The small town of Worthenbury is the site of a possible Saxon burgh; elsewhere, the fields and settlements have fossilised a Medieval landscape of moated settlement sites and open fields systems with ridge-and-furrow cultivation. Parts of this older landscape are being lost with changes in modern farming practices, but the area, particularly the western half, is still a remarkable survival, and is peaceful and tranquil. It is hard to imagine at a race-meeting at Bangor-on-Dee that the former colliery settlements of Johnstown and Rhosllanerchrugog in Deeside and Wrexham, and the large Wrexham industrial estate, are only a few miles away. The area is probably more well-known for its meres and mosses and for its peat-diggings.

Key Characteristics

- Flood plain or rolling lowland - sandstone and siltstone / mudstone is overlain in places by glacial till, fluvio-glacial drift and river alluvium, for example, along the course of the Dee, giving rise to a gently undulating landform.
- A rural agricultural character - intensively farmed with much arable land and parkland, with more arable to the east.
- Mixed native hedgerows with hedgerow trees - in a medium scale field pattern, with larger scale fields to the east.
- Small scale deciduous farm woodland – occasional blocks interspersed with farmland.
- Meres, mosses and flooding - The flood plain of the River Dee. Scattered field ponds and mosses such as Fenn's Moss in the south east are distinctive features.
- Relict medieval field patterns - much of the pastoral west, characterised by ridge and furrow cultivation patterns, overlain by later, Parliamentary Enclosures.
- Archaeology - Prehistoric ritual and funerary sites and distinctive Medieval, moated, manorial sites occur within the area.
- Small, rural village settlements, farms and parks - compact nucleated hamlets and villages often of Medieval formation, for example, Bangor-on-Dee and Overton, with sandstone, red brick and grey slate frequently evident.
- A unified agricultural landscape of simple composition - with texture provided by a variety of land cover elements including pasture, rush, marsh, woodland and meres.
- Closely related to the greater Cheshire plain.

 Proposed Site Location

Distinctive characteristics within NLCA 14 that are particularly desirable within the wider area however are not relevant to the site or study area include:

- Characteristics of the NLCA 14 description noted within the study area include:

- *A rural agricultural character - intensively farmed with much arable land and parkland, with more arable to the east.*
- *Mixed native hedgerows with hedgerow trees - in a medium scale field pattern, with larger scale fields to the east.*
- *Small, rural village settlements, farms and parks - compact nucleated hamlets and villages*
- *A unified agricultural landscape of simple composition - with texture provided by a variety of land cover elements including pasture, rush, marsh, woodland and meres.*

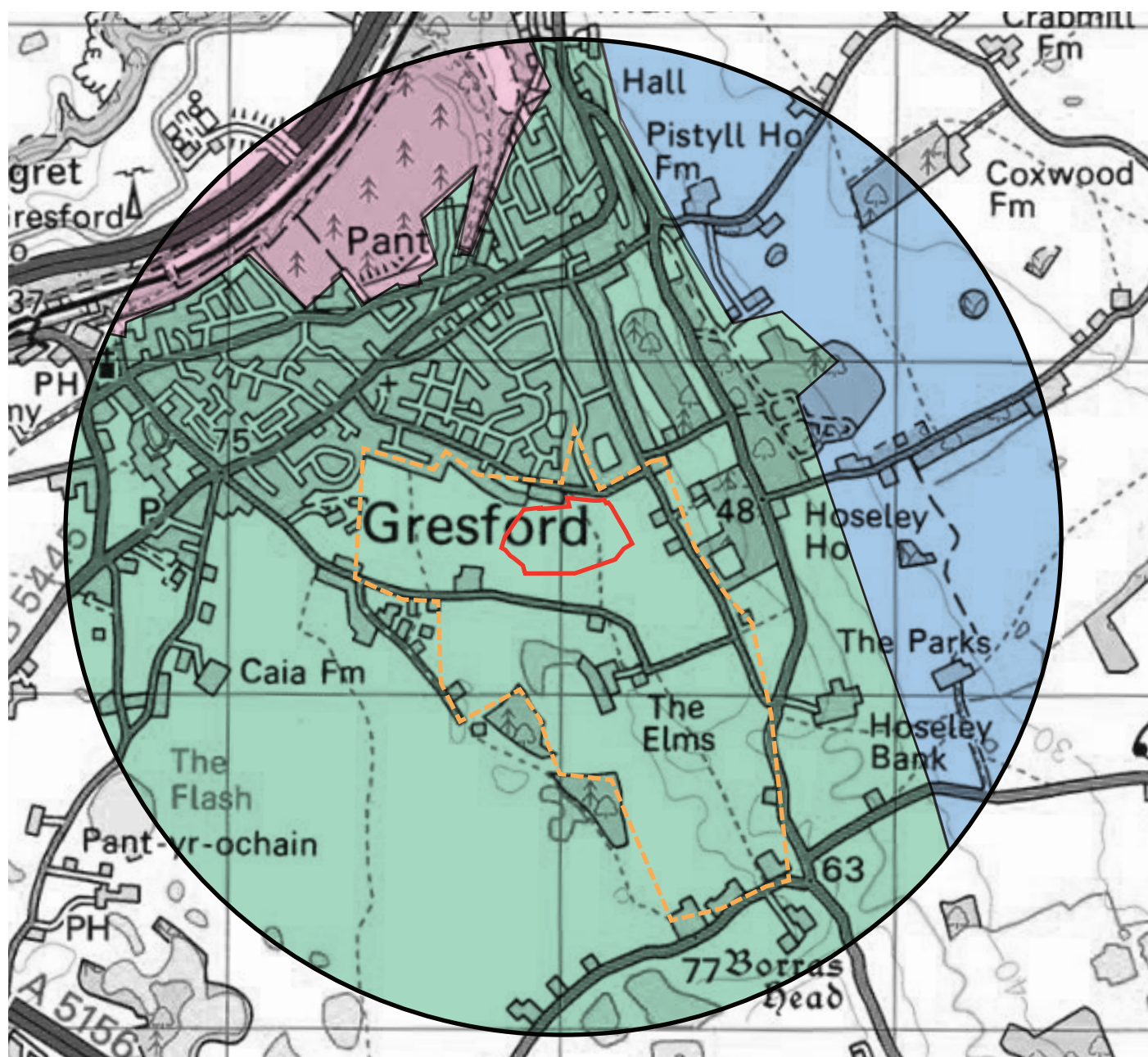


Figure 12. Borough Level Published Landscape Character Areas

KEY

- Proposal Site Boundary
- Study Area Boundary
- - - Visual Envelope

Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance (2007) - Landscape Character Areas (LCA)

- Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrass (LCA)
- Dee Terraces (LCA)
- River Alyn (LCA)

5.6 WREXHAM LANDMAP SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE (2007)

The Wrexham LANDMAP - Supplementary Planning Guidance adopted in March 2007 was undertaken by Wrexham to identify the key elements and features that make up the landscape within the Borough and 27 different Landscape Character Areas were identified. The proposal site is located within landscape character area Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrass (see figure 12) which mainly covers the majority of the study area. The remaining landscape character areas within the study area are Dee Terraces and River Alyn Valley.

GWERSYLLT, LLAY, GRESFORD, BORRAS

Landscape context

This character area is a centrally situated lowland terrace which has historically been a favourable area for settlement and farming. Its extent and character are threatened by urban growth, road corridors and sand and gravel quarrying.

Relevant Key Characteristics

Visual character:

- Generally undulating open arable farmland affected by proximity to urban areas
- Quarries are extensive
- Villages are semi-rural with extensive suburban development

Ecological character:

- Most farmland is improved

Cultural character:

- Major transport routes make the area very accessible to commuters

Relevant Landscape Sensitivity:

The landscape is under very high pressure. It is highly vulnerable to further sand and gravel quarrying - irreversible loss of character would result from any major schemes. High quality arable land is vulnerable to future residential, recreational highway, and commercial development.

Relevant LANDMAP Aspect Areas

This appraisal also considered the LANDMAP aspect areas within the study area with the following characteristic features worth noting that were not highlighted within the published character area Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrass.

- Good views are available to the east from the eastern edge of the area, and to Hope Mountain to the west. (Visual & Sensory, WRXHMVS068, Pant yr Ochain Area, Classification: Open Rolling Lowland, Evaluation: High)
- The very traditional appearance of this area belies fundamental social changes, in which farming practices are moving away from the traditional tenant-farmer and associated labourers to the employment of contractors, and where villages are becoming Liverpool or Manchester dormitories. (Cultural Landscape, WRXHMCL013, Maelor Gymraeg (North), Classification: Agricultural, Evaluation: Moderate)

DEE TERRACES AND RIVER ALYN

It is considered that the two remaining landscape character areas; Dee Terraces, River Alyn Valley that lie within the study area are approximately 0.5km east of the site and approximately 0.8km north west of the site. It is considered that due to intervening built form, landform and woodland that a limited amount of intervisibility of the proposed development would be experienced. Any intervisibility experienced within these two landscape character areas would not be substantial. The Dee Terraces, River Alyn Valley will not be considered any further within this report.

5.7 SUMMARY OF RELEVANT REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISTICS

The proposal site lies within the landscape character sub-area Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borras as identified within the published Wrexham Landmap Supplementary Planning Guidance (2007). The key characteristic features of the landscape character area are as follows:

- Undulating open farmland affected by proximity to urban areas.
- Villages are semi-rural with extensive suburban development.
- Good views west of Hope Mountain to the west.
- Farming practices are moving away from the traditional tenant-farmer and associated labourers to the employment of contractors, and where villages are becoming Liverpool or Manchester dormitories.

5.8 LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREA APPRAISAL



Figure 13. Local Level Landscape Character Areas

KEY

	Proposal Site Boundary		Urban Area		Woodland
	Urban Fringe Farmland		Rural Farmland		

The existing landscape character assessments available are detailed assessments of the wider area. A site specific character appraisal (see Figure 13) has been carried out by TPM Landscape as part of this assessment for the site and surrounding local landscape as part of this appraisal, in order to understand the landscape character and the interface between these varying character areas around the proposal site. In terms of potential impacts to the landscape resource, it is considered that the potential impacts will be confined to an area of the immediate landscape framed by the roads; Hillock Lane, Wynnstay Lane, Vicarage Lane and Chester Road due to the contained nature of the landscape and the topography. Any impacts beyond these roads would be limited to visual receptors. The landscape beyond this area has not been assessed as part of this local assessment (but has been assessed in detail through the previously described character assessments).

The Character Areas have been defined through a variety of characteristics and elements;

- Structure / Density / Scale
- Land use and Landscape
- Geology / Topography
- Visual Amenity



5.9 Urban Fringe Farmland

Settlement/Layout and Scale: Small to large scaled fields at the edge of settlement and adjacent to minor roads. Irregular and rectangular fields with some internal hedgerow and hedgerow tree enclosure which is reinforced by post and wire fencing. Individual cottages or farms scattered along minor roads. Area is influenced by neighbouring urban areas to immediate north and south-west. The existing open aspect of the properties on Hillock Lane provide a harsh edge of settlement, which is not well integrated in the landscape in this location.

Designation: No national landscape designation. Small area is subject to Special Landscape Area Policy.

Resource: Public right of way network runs through the landscape character area and the site allowing pedestrian access between Vicarage Lane and Hillock Lane/ Gresford Settlement.

Landform and topography: 73m-79m AOD. Landform is gently sloping downwards to the south and south-east.

Remoteness and Tranquility: Proximity to settlement and roads removes sense of remoteness. Views to neighbouring settlements within the view.

Susceptibility: Low - Medium Susceptibility

Quality and Value: Ordinary Quality, Moderate Value. The landscape is a local resource for the surrounding communities with a network of public footpaths and access to the countryside.

Sensitivity: Low - Medium Landscape Sensitivity.

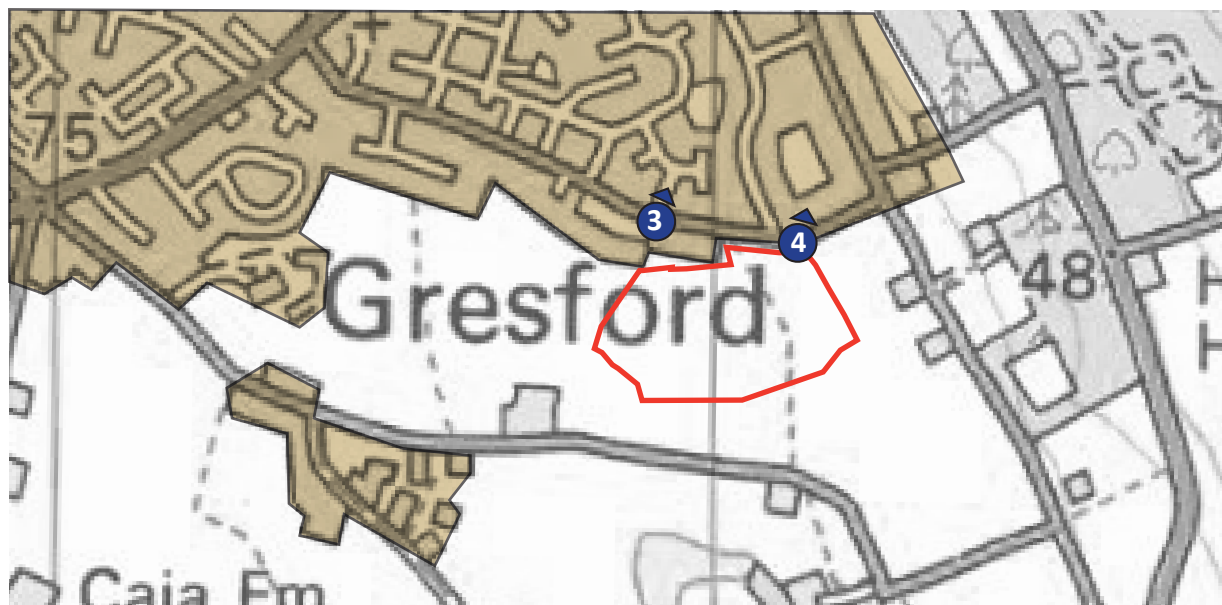
 Proposal Site Boundary



Photo 1. Looking north from the site and PRoW Mar/5



Photo 1. Looking north-east from Vicarage Lane and start of PRoW GRE/10



Proposal Site Boundary

5.10 Urban Area

Settlement/Layout and Scale: Gresford village with built form mainly focused along main roads and minor roads. Cul de Sac and private road housing within the more recent housing development areas. Housing ranges in height from single to two storey. Housing within Gresford is typically set back from the road by enclosed gardens or driveways. Housing along Hillock Lane tend to be further set back from the road by larger gardens.

Designation: No national landscape designation. Excluded from the Special Landscape Area Policy.

Resource: Residential Settlement

Landform and Topography: Landform varies from 70m-81m AOD.

Remoteness and Tranquility: A developed and peopled landscape at the interface with the countryside setting. Not tranquil due to traffic, low activity urban environment.

Susceptibility: Low Susceptibility

Quality and Value: Ordinary Quality, Low Value.

Sensitivity: Low Sensitivity

5.11 Woodland and Rural Farmland

It is considered that the potential impacts are limited to Urban Fringe Farmland and Urban Area due to the contained nature of the landscape and the topography. Woodland and Rural Farmland to the east of Wynnstay Lane and south of Vicarage Lane have been scoped out of this assessment.



Photo 3. Looking north from the site and PRoW



Photo 4. Looking north south of the proposal site (15.54/135/1)

6.0 LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

6.1 LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

The extent to which a landscape can accept change of a particular type and scale without unacceptable adverse effects on its character

NLCAs 13 and 14 (National Landscape Character Area)

Having assessed the local landscape character and the broader landscape some conclusions can be drawn as to the relative sensitivity of National Landscape Character Areas 13 and 14.

The proposal site lies within NLCAs 13 and 14, a large National Character Area which includes a wide variety of both urban and open countryside landscapes. Some broad similarities and commonality between the study area and the characteristics of this landscape exist but it does not contain any landscape types and features that are intrinsic to the landscape character areas or features that if lost or changed would irrevocably alter the understanding of the NLCAs. The NLCAs include both old and new residential development and is a well settled landscape. The quality and value of the landscape also varies over such a large area and the sensitivity is generally ascribed as medium, however will be medium-high in some areas and low in others, and are assessed further at a local level.

The sensitivity of NLCAs 13 and 14 are assessed as **Medium**.

Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borras Valleys (Borough Landscape Character Area)

The Regional Landscape is described in the Wrexham LANDMAP - Supplementary Planning Guidance (2007). The study area is mainly covered by the landscape character area Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borras Valleys which offers characteristic features that are in keeping with the site and surrounding area.

The quality and value of this landscape is ordinary-good with some strong features such as an undulating mixed farmland, hedgerows and woodland. It is however acknowledged within the LANDMAP characterisation that farmland is affected and influenced by urban areas and semi-rural villages containing extensive concentrated areas of suburban development. Susceptibility to change for the landscape character area is considered within this appraisal as medium consideration of the urban fringe location and the value is assessed as Ordinary with some good features. The overall sensitivity for the landscape character area is assessed as **Medium**. There are areas within this character area, predominantly defined by the Special Landscape Area designation which are considered to be of higher value that contribute to the setting of the settlement.

Urban Fringe Farmland (Local Landscape Character Area)

The TPM assessed local character area that the site is located within is urban fringe farmland comprising of gently sloping farmland influenced by neighbouring settlement.

The quality and value of this local landscape is ordinary-moderate and is a local resource for the surrounding communities with a network of public footpaths and access to the countryside while influenced by neighbouring urban built form and road network. Susceptibility to change is considered within this appraisal as low-medium. The overall sensitivity for the landscape character area is assessed as **Low-Medium**.

Urban Area (Local Character Area)

This TPM assessed local character area is predominantly urban and located immediately north of the site.

The quality and value of this local landscape is ordinary-low due to the high amount of urban built form and road network. Susceptibility to change is considered within this appraisal as low. The overall sensitivity for the landscape character area is assessed as **Low**.

6.2 LANDSCAPE CHANGE AND EFFECTS - NATIONAL AND REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AREAS

The existing landscape character assessments described in Section 5 consider the character of the landscape in the wider landscape at National and Regional level.

The magnitude of change of the proposed development on the wider landscape is assessed as being **Negligible** at a National scale, **Low** for the Borough area and Medium to Negligible for the local area. The development of the proposal site will require the loss of some rural fields, however the proposal site will not remove or alter any of the key characteristics that define these areas of landscape. The proposed development will bring forward landscape mitigation which can reduce the landscape effects or change the nature of change over time and help to integrate the development in the landscape.

The change from fields to settlement will not be unduly incongruous in this urban fringe location, and will be perceived as an addition to the existing settlement. The landscape effects at year 1 are assessed as being **Negligible** at a national scale, **Slight-Moderate** for the borough area and Slight Moderate to Negligible at a local scale. Over time the landscape effects will remain the same **by year 15** as landscape mitigation helps to integrate the proposed built form in its context and it becomes an established part of the existing settlement.

Table 1 - SUMMARY OF LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

Landscape Receptor	Hierarchy of Importance	Sensitivity	Change to Landscape (Impact)	Change to Landscape (Impact)	Landscape Effect	Landscape Effect
			Year 1 pre-mitigation	Year 15 with mitigation	Year 1 pre-mitigation	Year 15 with mitigation
Wider Landscape Character Effects						
National Landscape Character Area 13 Deeside and Wrexham	National	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
National Landscape Character Area 14 Maelor	National	Medium	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
Regional Landscape Character Effects						
Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrass Landscape Character Area	Borough	Medium	Low	Low	Slight-Moderate Adverse	Slight-Moderate Neutral
Local Landscape Character Effects						
Urban Fringe Farmland Landscape Character Area	Local	Low-Medium	Medium	Low	Slight-Moderate Adverse	Slight-Moderate Neutral
Urban Area	Local	Low	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

7.0 VISUAL APPRAISAL

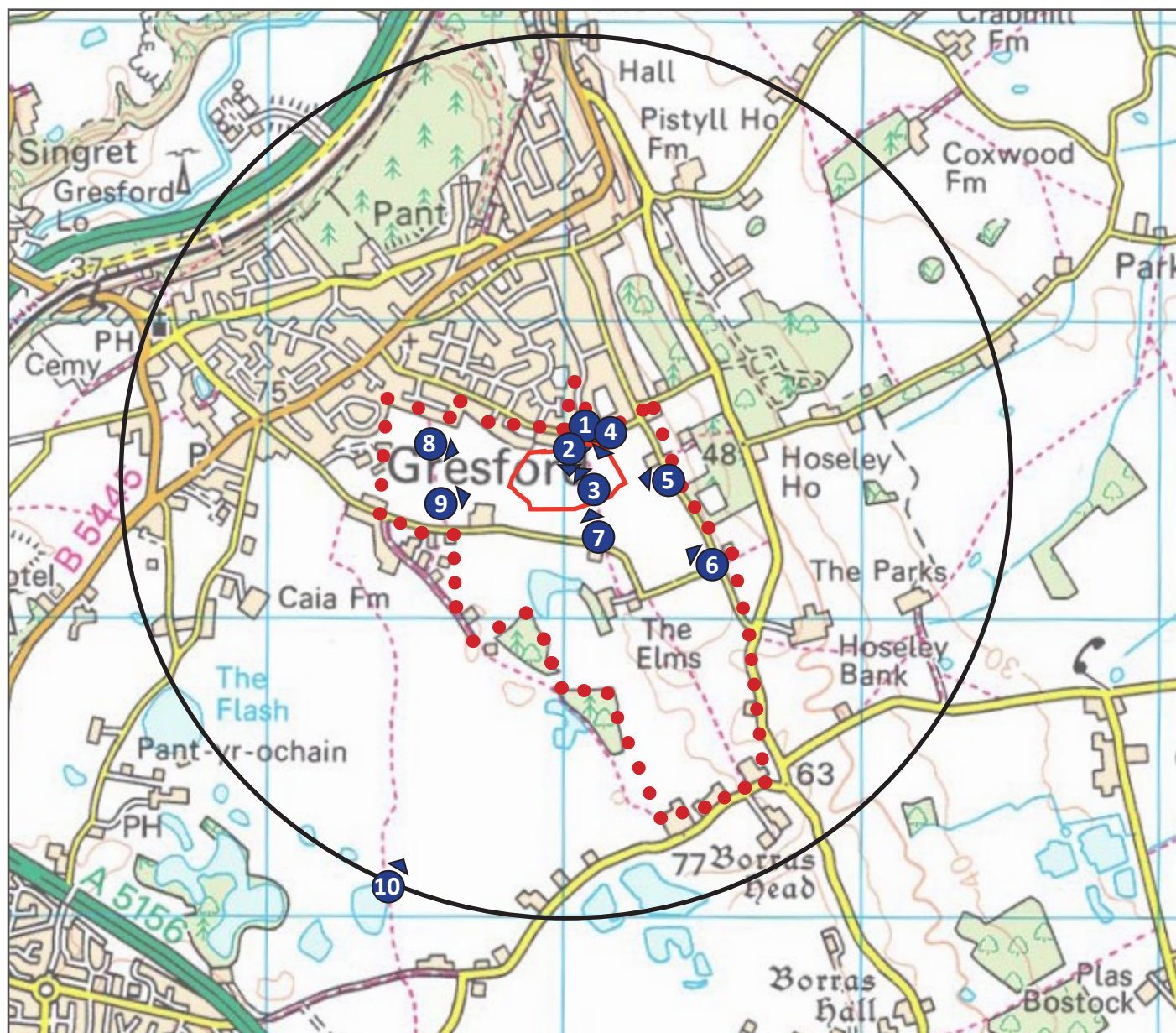


Figure 14. Viewpoint / Receptor Location Plan

-  Location of proposed site
-  Location of proposed site
-  Study area
-  Visual Envelope

Please refer to Appendix 1.0
for Visual Receptor Figures



Inset of Vp11 located approximately 2.7km west of the site

7.0 VISUAL APPRAISAL

7.1 VISUAL APPRAISAL - RECEPTORS

Eleven viewpoints have been selected from various locations and possible vantage points identified through site visits and analysis. Views for the appraisal have been chosen to be both representative of the range of differing receptors (public, community, residents and visitors) within the study areas and of the visual amenity available at points north, east, south and west of the proposal site.

- Viewpoint 1 - Residents of 5 properties, Pedestrians (Sidewalk) and Vehicle users of Stancliffe Avenue.
- Viewpoint 2 - Residents of 5 properties off Hillock Lane.
- Viewpoint 3 - Pedestrians users of PRoW (MAR/5) within site boundary.
- Viewpoint 4 - Residents of 10 properties and Vehicle Users from Hillock Lane.
- Viewpoint 5 - Residents of 2 properties and Vehicle Users from Wynnstay Lane.
- Viewpoint 6 - Vehicle Users from junction of Wynnstay Lane and Vicarage Road.
- Viewpoint 7 - Residents of 4 properties, Pedestrian users of PRoW (MAR/5) to south of site and Vehicle users of Vicarage Lane.
- Viewpoint 8 - Residents of 4 properties, Pedestrians users of PRoW (GRE/10).
- Viewpoint 9 - Pedestrian users of PRoW (GRE/10) near Vicarage Road.
- Viewpoint 10 - Pedestrian users of PRoW (BIE/9).
- Viewpoint 11 - Recreational Users from Alyn Waters Country Park.

7.2 SUSCEPTIBILITY

Occupiers of residential properties are considered to be of high or medium susceptibility depending on their location or outlook. Users of outdoor recreational facilities or public rights of way whose attention is focused on the landscape are considered to be of high susceptibility.

Pedestrian users of highway footpath routes where views involved are transient and sporadic are considered to be of medium susceptibility.

Vehicle users travelling through the landscape in cars, trains or other transport such that the speed and nature of the views involved are short lived and have no special significance and are considered to be of low susceptibility.

7.3 VISUAL QUALITY AND VALUE

The value of a particular area or view in terms of what is seen.

The quality of the views of the surrounding landscape vary as the some of the view locations include aspects which are important to the wider landscape character descriptions and include viewing points of local importance. Views dominated by the road network and urban built form with few view opportunities out from this are assessed as Ordinary, Views where open countryside and farmed fields play a part in the view, including footpaths and road routes are assessed as Moderate.

7.4 SENSITIVITY

Residential Receptors

Residential receptors have been identified and assessed from the north, east and south of the proposal site to represent surrounding close and mid-range views from residential receptors. Viewpoints 1, 2 and 4 have been identified from the north and north-east to represent close proximity views from residential receptors. Viewpoints 5, 7 and 8 have been identified from the east, south and north-west to represent mid-range views from residential receptors.

The following properties in the vicinity of the proposal site are likely to have some views of the proposed development:

- Vp 1 - 1.1 Residential Property - 1 x 1.5 storey property at end of Stancliffe Avenue with side on views from principle rooms to the south. **Medium-High Sensitivity** (in urban setting).
- 1.2 Residential Group - 4 x 2 storey properties on Stancliffe Avenue with slightly oblique or oblique upper floor views from

non principle rooms to the south. **Medium Sensitivity** (in urban setting)

Vp 2 - Properties on Hillock Lane to the immediate north - Approximately 5 x 2 storey properties with rear on views to the south. **High Sensitivity**.

Vp 4 - 4.1 Residential Group - 4 x 2 storey properties on Hillock Lane to the north-east with front on or slightly oblique views to the south-west. **Medium-High Sensitivity** (in urban fringe setting).

4.2 Residential Group - 6 x 2 storey properties on Hillock Lane to the north-east with upper floor oblique views to the south-west. **Medium Sensitivity** (in urban fringe setting).

Vp 5 - Properties on Wynnstay Lane to the south-east - 2 x 2 storey properties with oblique views to the north-west. **High Sensitivity**.

Vp 7 - Properties on Vicarage Lane to the south - 4 x 2 storey properties with views to the north. **Medium-High Sensitivity** (in urban fringe setting).

Vp 8 - Four properties including Oak Brow and Midlake House to the north-west - 4 x 2 storey properties with rear or oblique views to the south-east. **Medium-High Sensitivity** (in urban fringe setting).

Pedestrian Receptors

Pedestrian receptors have been identified and assessed from within the site, to the south and west of the proposal site to represent surrounding close, mid-range and distant views from pedestrian users of public rights of ways within the countryside.

Viewpoints 11 - Pedestrian users of the PRoW BIE/9. A footpath with views of a quarry and surrounding countryside, the receptors are assessed as having a **High Sensitivity**.

Viewpoints 3, 7, 8, and 9 - Pedestrian users of the PRoWs including Footpaths MAR/5, GRE/10, and BIE/9. As these are all footpaths with views of urban fringe with surrounding countryside, the receptors are assessed as having a **Medium-High Sensitivity** (in urban fringe setting).

Viewpoint 1- Pedestrian users of the sidewalk of Stancliffe Avenue with views within an urban setting assessed as having a **Low-Medium Sensitivity** (in urban setting)

Vehicle Receptors

Vp 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7 - Vehicle receptors assessed within this appraisal include vehicle users of Stancliffe Avenue (vp 1), Hillock Lane (vp 4), Wynnstay Lane (vps 5 and 6) and Vicarage Lane (Vp7). Due to the transient nature of vehicle travel all of the vehicle receptors have been assessed as having a **Low Sensitivity**.

Recreational Receptor

Vp 10- Recreational receptor of Alyn Waters Country Park whose attention may be focused on the landscape and has been assessed as having a **High Sensitivity**.

7.5 VISUAL SENSITIVITY SUMMARY

There are occupiers of residential receptors with high or medium-high sensitivity at the boundaries to the proposal site where the possibility of principal rooms and garden areas to be affected is recognised in an urban or urban fringe setting. Elsewhere views towards the site are typically possible from upper floor windows from the south-east, south and north-west where the sensitivity is adjudged to be high or medium-high in an urban fringe setting.

There are users of a PRoW where the sensitivity is assessed as high or medium-high from the south, south-west and west of the site within the context of a rural or urban fringe setting. There are also users of a section of PRoW from within the site where the sensitivity will be medium due to views experienced being of the southern urban fringe at close proximity. User of a sidewalk will experience low-medium sensitivity due to the urban context with views being framed by built form on either side.

The highway network borders the site along the northern boundary from Hillock Lane while the southern end of Stancliffe Road is located opposite the northern boundary of the site. Wynnstay Lane located in close proximity to the east/ south-east of the site and Vicarage Lane is located in close proximity to the south of the site. All vehicle user receptors are considered to have a low

sensitivity.

7.6 CHANGE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

Eleven representative viewpoints were assessed with further description of the assessed change in Appendix 1. A summary of the considered change at year 1 for twenty visual receptors is below:

There are seven visual receptors (or groups of receptors) which will experience a high change due to the proposed development and include residential, pedestrian users and vehicle users located within or in the immediate vicinity of the site. Four visual receptors will experience a medium change including residential, pedestrian users and vehicle users located in close proximity. The remaining nine visual receptors considered will experience a low-medium to negligible change.

7.7 ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL EFFECTS

The following assessment of visual effects at year 1 has been made with the assumption that the proposed development located within the red site boundary (see Figure 1) will comprise of 116 properties that are up to 2 storeys high prior to adopting the mitigation measures described in Figure 15. Table 2 illustrates the assessment criteria to determine visual effects and whether the receptor is at a local, regional or national importance.

Residential Receptors

Eight representative residential receptors (or groups of receptors) have been identified and assessed. Of these, occupiers of residential properties to the immediate north on Hillock Lane and at the end of Stancliffe Avenue junction will experience substantial to moderate adverse effects while occupiers of residential properties to the north-east on Hillock Lane will experience moderate-substantial to moderate adverse effects. Occupiers of residential properties to the east on Wynnstay Lane will experience moderate-substantial adverse effects while occupiers of residential properties along Vicarage Lane to the south of the site will experience Moderate adverse effects. Properties to the west off a private road accessible off Hillock Lane with views east will experience Moderate adverse effects.

Pedestrian Receptors

Six representative pedestrian users of public right of ways and a sidewalk have been identified. Three visual receptors are to experience moderate-substantial adverse effects due to users of a section of a PRoW being located within the site or south of the site which is common for this type of development and users of a sidewalk with direct views of the proposed main access which includes the widening of the road and loss of boundary hedgerow. One visual receptors will experience slight-moderate adverse effects due to a PRoW being located at mid-range of the site to the south-west. The remaining two pedestrian receptors will experience negligible effects due to intervening hedgerow, trees, woodland, landform and built form.

Vehicle Receptors

Four representative vehicle receptors have been identified and assessed. Vehicle users immediately north on Stancliffe Avenue and north-east on Hillock Lane will experience moderate adverse effects due to the widening of Hillock Lane, loss of hedgerow along Hillock Lane and close proximity views of proposed built form. Vehicle users of Wynnstay Lane will experience at most Slight-Moderate effects.

Recreational Receptor

Recreation receptors of Alyn Waters Country Park will experience a negligible effect due to intervening trees, hedgerows and woodland screening any change.

Table 2 - SUMMARY OF VISUAL EFFECTS

View	Hierarchy of Importance	Sensitivity	Change to view (Impact)	Change to view (Impact)	Visual Effect	Visual Effect
			Year 1 pre-mitigation	Year 15 with mitigation	Year 1 pre-mitigation	Year 15 with mitigation
1	Local	1.1 Residential Property - Medium-High (in urban setting)	High	High	Moderate-Substantial Adverse	Moderate-Substantial Neutral
		1.2 Residential Group - Medium (in urban setting)	Low-Medium	Low-Medium	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Neutral
		Pedestrian Users (Sidewalk) - Low-Medium (in urban setting)	High	High	Moderate-Substantial Adverse	Moderate-Substantial Neutral
		Vehicle Users - Low (in urban setting)	High	High	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Neutral
2	Local	Residents - High	High	High	Substantial Adverse	Substantial Adverse
3	Local	Pedestrian Users (PRoW) - Medium-High	High	High	Moderate-Substantial Adverse	Moderate-Substantial Neutral
4	Local	4.1 Residents - Medium-High (in urban fringe setting)	High	High	Moderate-Substantial Adverse	Moderate-Substantial Neutral
		4.2 Residents - Medium (in urban fringe setting)	Medium	Medium	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Neutral
		Vehicle Users - Low	High	High	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Neutral
5	Local	Residents - High	Medium	Medium	Moderate-Substantial Adverse	Moderate-Substantial Neutral
		Vehicle Users - Low	Low	Low	Slight-Moderate Adverse	Slight-Moderate Neutral
6	Local	Vehicle Users - Low	Low	Low	Slight Adverse	Slight Neutral
7	Local	Residents - Medium-High (in urban fringe setting)	Low-Medium	Low	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Neutral
		Pedestrian Users (PRoW) - Medium-High (in urban fringe setting)	Medium	Low	Moderate-Substantial Adverse	Moderate Neutral
		Vehicle Users - Low (in urban fringe setting)	Low	Low	Slight Adverse	Slight Neutral

8	Local	Residents - Medium-High (in urban fringe setting) Pedestrian Users (PRoW) - Medium-High (in urban fringe setting)	Medium Negligible	Low Negligible	Moderate Adverse Negligible	Slight-Moderate Neutral Negligible
9	Local	Pedestrian Users (PRoW) - Medium-High (in urban fringe setting)	Low	Low	Slight-Moderate Adverse	Slight-Moderate Neutral
10	Local	Recreational Users - High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible
11	Local	Pedestrian Users (PRoW) - High	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

8.0 MITIGATION

8.1 MITIGATION PROPOSALS

The visual impacts identified are associated with views of the proposed residential development from both near and mid distance views. Comprehensive landscape proposals will be an integral part of the detailed planning application. However to provide mitigation for identified landscape and visual impacts, a Landscape Framework Plan has been prepared.

The Landscape Framework Plan (see Figure 15) seeks to mitigate the impacts and ensure the development addresses both landscape and visual impacts by the following methods:

1. Retain and enhance existing hedgerows and trees within the site where possible and promote native planting to form field boundaries between the development and agricultural fields.
2. Plant perimeter trees and hedgerows where possible along boundaries to soften the proposed built form.
3. Plant trees internally where possible to promote structure planting within the site and soften the overall built form of the development.
4. Retain and enhance the section of PRow (Footpath MAR/5) that runs through the site and set back the proposed built form from the PRow route.
5. Hedgerow along Hillock Lane will be lost to allow for the widening of Hillock Lane and for the main access. Suggest hedgerow is replanted along the frontage where possible to maintain a wildlife corridor and because native hedgerow is a characteristic feature of the local landscape.



Figure 15. Landscape Framework Plan

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
|  | Site Boundary |  | Retain and enhance the section of PRoW (Footpath MAR/5) |
|  | Retain and enhance existing hedgerows where possible |  | Set back proposed built form |
|  | Retain existing hedgerow trees where possible |  | Proposed hedgerow |
|  | Loss of hedgerow for widening of Hillock Lane and proposed access. |  | Proposed perimeter trees |
|  | Existing overhead line that proposed trees should stay clear of |  | Proposed main site access |
| | |  | Proposed built form near Hillock Lane should be set back and in line with existing properties along Hillock Lane. |

9.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

9.1 LANDSCAPE RESOURCE SUMMARY

The landscape and visual appraisal has been assessed from desktop based research, site visits and in consideration of current national and borough character assessment guidelines. The following summary has been made with the assumption that the proposed development located within the red site boundary (see Figure 1) will comprise of 109 properties that are predominantly 2 storeys high, and adopts the mitigation measures described in Figure 15.

The proposed development will introduce new residential buildings, the widening of a section of Hillock Lane, roads and new landscaping to the southern edge of Gresford. The proposal site comprises of agricultural land with a footpath running north to south through the site. The proposal site is within Green Barrier Planning Policy. The Gresford settlement is mainly surrounded by Special Landscape Areas to the north and east, however the site itself is not land designated as Special Landscape Area.

Wider Landscape Character

The wider landscape character is described at National level through NLCA13 Deeside and Wrexham and NLCA14 Maelor. Both of these national landscape character areas demonstrate a varied mix of features, elements and characteristics, some of which are represented within the study area such as the general rural characteristics of fields and hedgerows, however some of the more defining characteristics of these character areas, such as the Dee Estuary are not present. The overall sensitivity for the type of development proposed is assessed within this appraisal as medium for both NLCA 13 and NLCA 14.

Borough Landscape Character

At a Borough level, this study has assessed the published Landscape Character Area 8 Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrass that the site and majority of the study area is located within. The Borough landscape character area is assessed within this appraisal considered to be of medium landscape susceptibility with ordinary to good Landscape quality and value resulting in an overall medium landscape sensitivity.

Local Landscape Character

The above character appraisals are relevant to an understanding of the wider landscape context. A local character appraisal was carried out by TPM Landscape to understand the local landscape character and the interface between these varying character areas around the proposal site. The site was identified within urban fringe farmland comprising of small to large scaled fields in an area where the edge of settlement, has influence over the rural characteristics, and adjacent to minor roads and generally bound by hedgerows and trees. The quality and value of this local landscape is ordinary-moderate and the susceptibility to change is considered low-medium. The overall sensitivity for the landscape character area is assessed as low-medium as a result of the existing edge of settlement character. The change to the local landscape character area is considered medium resulting in a slight-moderate effects at year 1. The nature of change will become neutral by 15 due to the proposed development establishing as an extension of the urban settlement and the mitigation planting maturing, and providing a more integrated urban/rural edge than as present.

Green Barrier

It is considered that whilst the propose development would represent some encroachment of the countryside it would not contribute to the coalescence of settlement, and the proposed masterplan will allow the setting of Gresford to be protected.

9.2 VISUAL RESOURCE SUMMARY

The proposed development has been considered from eleven representative viewpoint locations for residential, public footpaths, recreation and travel receptors. The study area is contained to approximately 1.5km where views of, or towards the proposal site are assessed, beyond this any change would not be perceptible. The proposal site is visually contained to the south of the settlement, with views to the north limited by settlement edge. Views to the east, south and west are limited to a mid distance due to hedgerows, trees, woodland, built form and topography.

Nearby Views

Nearby views will be experienced from properties immediately adjacent to the northern site boundary. Views will also be experienced from residential properties in close proximity of the proposed main access to the site and a small number of residential properties

to the north-east of the site. Direct views will be experienced from a section of PRow that runs through the site.

Mid to Long Distance Views

Any mid to long distance views will generally be filtered through layers of woodland, field trees and hedgerows and topography. Mid-distance views will be possible to the east/ south-east by vehicle users and a couple of residential properties, and also to the south from a PRow and a few residential properties. Mid distance views from the north-west are possible from a PRow and a few residential properties. Long distance views including views outside of the study area and visual envelope were considered to the south and west however would be substantially screened by intervening topography, built form, trees, and woodland. Elevated views from the north-west at Hope Mountain will be imperceptible due to a distance of 6.8km and intervening woodland, trees and built form.

Residential Properties

There will be a large change to views from occupiers of 5 residential properties that back onto the northern boundary of the site off Hillock Lane, which due to their proximity to the proposed development. Proposed mitigation of trees and landscaping will help to soften the built form but the open views across will be lost for these properties.

There will also be a large change to views from occupiers of 1 property at the end of Stancliffe Avenue and 4 properties along Hillock Lane located to the immediate north and north-east of the site. The large change is a result of their proximity to the main access and widening of the section of Hillock Lane. Proposed mitigation will include the replacement of hedgerow along the northern boundary and the setting back of built form to help reduce the impact and establish the site as part of the existing urban fringe setting.

Nearby occupiers of residential properties assessed to experience a medium change include 4 properties along the end of Stancliffe Avenue to the north of the site, 6 properties off Hillock Lane to the north-east of the site with oblique upper floor views and 4 properties to the north-west of the site along a private road off Hillock Lane. Proposed mitigation of replacement hedgerows and the setting back of built form will help the proposed development over time and establish as part of the settlement.

Occupiers of residential properties at mid range distance will experience a medium change including 2 properties to the east along Wynnstay Lane, and 4 properties to the south of the site along Vicarage Lane. The effects will reduce and the nature of change will neutralise over time as the proposed development establishes itself as an extension of the edge of settlement and the proposed mitigation planting matures.

Public Right of Way (PRow) Users

There will be a large change for users of 1 footpath that runs from north to south through the site. The footpath continues south with users to experience a Medium change which will reduce over time as mitigation planting matures and the proposed development establishes as part of the edge of settlement. This section of footpath is part of a larger sequential route and it is inevitable for a footpath to experience substantial effects when running through or located within the immediate vicinity of this type of development. The remainder of the footpath route will remain substantially unaltered.

Three remaining PRow's assessed in the mid-distance views will experience no more than a medium change that will become neutral over time and mitigation planting matures.

Sidewalk Users

There will be large change for users of the sidewalk along Stancliffe Avenue walking south in close proximity to the main access of the proposed development, however this will be in the context of the existing settlement and not be unduly incongruous. Replacement hedgerow planting will re-establish an attractive setting.

Vehicle Users

There will be a large change for vehicle users of the section of Hillock Lane and southern end of Stancliffe Avenue located adjacent to the northern boundary of the site, however will be in the context of the existing settlement and not be unduly incongruous. Replacement hedgerow planting will re-establish an attractive setting along the section of Hillock Lane that is to be widened.

Other users of vehicular routes including Wynnstay Lane and Vicarage Lane with mid-distance or distant views were assessed as experiencing at most a small change.

Recreation Users

Recreational users of Alyn Waters Country Park and considered to not experience any change.

Mitigation Measures

Following the proposed mitigation measures, the expected nature of change for the majority of visual effects will become neutral as proposed trees and hedgerows soften the built form and provide a positive urban/rural interface. All of the available views of the proposed development are from within 1.5km of the application site and all of the identified impacts are local in nature with minimal potential to affect the wider appreciation of the surrounding countryside. Mitigation measures include the retention of existing vegetation and the provision of a strong landscape framework for the urban/rural interface, and a well landscaped design layout.

9.3 CONCLUSION

Landscape Effects

The proposed development will mean the loss of some urban fringe countryside and a section of hedgerow along Hillock Lane. At a local level, there will be a medium change, however the change from fields to settlement will not be unduly incongruous in this edge of settlement location, and will be perceived as a part of the existing settlement as the site matures. The site is not designated as a Special Landscape Area which indicates that the site does not meet the criteria of possessing high landscape value that contributes to the setting of the local settlement, unlike the majority of land to the north, east and further south of Gresford. The site is locally designated as Green Barrier land and whilst there would be some encroachment of the countryside, development of the site would not contribute to coalescence of settlements. It is considered that with a strong landscape infrastructure the proposed layout would protect the setting of Gresford. National and regional landscape character areas are assessed as experiencing no detrimental effects.

Visual Effects

There will be a large change to a small number of residential properties located directly adjacent to the site and the public footpath which runs through the site, which is an inevitable consequence of the urban edge setting of the proposed site. Long distance views to the proposal site are restricted due to intervening hedgerows, built form, woodland, trees and topography.

The proposed mitigation landscaping along the southern boundary will mean that as the trees and hedgerows mature the settlement will be able to have a more integrated setting in the landscape.

APPENDIX 1.0

VISUAL RECEPTORS - SEPARATE A3 DOCUMENT

APPENDIX 2.0

LVIA METHODOLOGY