Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed Residential Development

at

Gamford Lane, Rossett, Wrexham, LL12 0BA

For

Land Planning

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Contents

1.0 Executive Summary

2.0 Introduction

3.0 Planning Policy Context

4.0 Methodology

5.0 Landscape Character Baseline Conditions

6.0 Description of Development Proposal

7.0 Predicted Landscape Effects of the Proposed Development and Mitigation

8.0 Predicted Visual Effects of the Proposed Development and Mitigation

9.0 Residual Effects

10.0 Summary / Conclusions

Illustrations

Fig 01 Site Location

Fig 02 Landscape Planning Designations

Fig 03 Landscape Context and Theoretical Zone of Visual Influence

Fig 04 Proposed Site Layout

Fig 05 Viewpoints 1 and 2

Fig 06 Viewpoints 3, 4, 5 and 6

Fig 07 Viewpoints 7 and 8

Fig 08 LANDMAP Cultural and Geological Landscapes Aspects

Fig 09 LANDMAP Historic Landscape and Landscape Habitats Aspects

Fig 10 LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report describes the landscape and visual context of the site at Gamford Lane, Rossett, and provides an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, in accordance with current guidance.

1.2 The report describes the site in terms of its features based on a thorough review of LANDMAP data, the Welsh landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences are recorded and evaluated (LANDMAP Natural Resources Wales). The proposed site is located within a landscape classified as flat open lowland farmland (LANDMAP Visual & Sensory Dee Terraces WRXHMVS054). The site has the following relevant local landscape planning designations:

- Wrexham UDP Policy EC1 Green Barriers Policy
- Wrexham UDP Policy EC5 Special Landscape Areas

1.3 The application site is located on the south east of Rossett Village occupying a pocket of agricultural land between the east side of Gamford Lane and the access track to the Bungalow and the grounds of Darland Hall. The site is well contained by built form to the west and north, as the site lies contiguous with the settlement boundary along its north western and northern site boundaries.

1.4 Given the *medium* sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *moderate* magnitude of change, the overall residual effect on the landscape is regarded as *minor to moderate adverse.*

1.5 The overall residual visual effect of the development is assessed as *minor to moderate adverse* for residential receptors and *minor* adverse for recreational receptors.

1.6 Proposed mitigation will include a landscape scheme of trees, hedgerows and gardens both internally and to all site boundaries, with a view to providing a green framework that will minimise the landscape and visual effects and assimilate the site within this urban edge landscape setting.

1.7 There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on features of importance to landscape or nature conservation. The development will result in a localised *moderate to minor* residual adverse effect on the landscape character of a small area that lies just within the SLA.

1.8 There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on the visual amenity of recreational receptors or residential receptors, within or outside the SLA.

1.9 Given the findings of our assessment, it is our opinion that this is a suitable location for the proposed development given the design and mitigation measures.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This landscape and visual appraisal (LVIA) has been produced in support of an outline planning application with all matters reserved with regard to the proposed development of land at Gamford Lane, Rossett, Wrexham on behalf of Land Planning, Malpas.

2.2 The LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with the current Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA[1]).

2.3 The location and extent of the site is indicated on *Fig 01*.

[1]*Guidelines for Landscape &Visual Impact Assessment;* Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment; 3rd Edition 2013

3.0 Planning Policy context

3.1 This section highlights the aspects of planning policy which are relevant to the landscape appraisal of the proposed development. [refer *Fig 02*]

National Landscape Planning Related Policy

3.2 The relevant national planning policy framework is provided principally by Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 9 November 2016). This document refers to Special Landscape Areas, and states at para. 5.3.11:

"*Non statutory designations, such as Special Landscape Areas…should be soundly based on a formal scientific assessment of the nature conservation, landscape or geological value of the site. Local non-statutory sites can add value to the planning process particularly if such designations are informed by community participation and reflect community values. Local planning authorities should apply these designations to areas of substantive conservation value where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. Such designations should not unduly restrict acceptable development."* [My added emphasis]

3.3 Technical Advice Note 12: *Design* provides guidance on various issues to be considered when developing a project design including landscape. This document states in para. 5.5.2 that:

'In general terms, good design will almost always be dependent on working within the natural constraints and the historic character of the landscape and this should be the starting point from which the design of development evolves. The aim should be to achieve good design solutions which maximise the natural landscape assets and minimise environmental impact on the landscape.'

RRA commentary on how development relates to policy

This LVIA concludes that the strategy for the proposed development follows this design guidance. The context of the site has been considered carefully and a design strategy prepared to integrate the new development into it surroundings.

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan Landscape Planning Related Policy

3.4 Planning Policy is interpreted at a more local level by the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP), Adopted February 2005. The policies of most relevance to landscape issues are:

Policy EC1 Green Barriers

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.

The purposes of a Green Barrier include:
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.*

RRA commentary on how development relates to policy

This LVIA concludes that the strategy for the proposed development will not result in any coalescence with other settlements. The location of the site within existing built form on three sides, will result in a 'rounding off' the urban area between Gamford Lane and the woodland south of Darland Hall, and not encroach into the wider countryside. Furthermore, there will be no significant adverse effects on the visual amenity of the residential and recreational receptors.

Policy EC5 Special Landscape Areas

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.

RRA commentary on how development relates to policy

It is our opinion, based upon our review of the LANDMAP data – and in particular the Visual and Sensory Aspect Area Dee Terraces - and from our detailed site survey, that the key qualities of the landscape within the SLA in this locale have already been partially compromised by the adjacent built form and urban edge of Rossett, and that the integrity of the wider SLA would not be significantly affected by the proposed development given the proposed tree and hedgerow planting along the southern boundary, and within the site itself.

With reference to the LANDMAP Special Landscape Area Guidance,[2] this describes the methodology in identifying SLA's as below:

> *'The broad search areas are determined from the five LANDMAP Evaluated Aspects: the Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual & Sensory, the Historic Landscape and the Cultural Landscape.* ***The LANDMAP overall evaluation score and LANDMAP evaluation criteria for each evaluated aspect layer will be particularly informative at this stage****.'* (Our emphasis)

We note that the LANDMAP overall evaluations that from a key part in defining SLAs are predominantly 'moderate' for the site itself; however we observe that these evaluations do increase in some of the adjacent Aspect Areas to the south east, suggesting that the site itself lies within an area that does not fully exhibit the key qualities of the designated SLA.

[2] *LANDMAP Guidance Note 1;* LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas, 2013

4.0 Methodology

General

4.1 A methodological framework has been used for this initial landscape and visual assessment based on the broad principles of following documents:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact assessment (GLVIA)* (3rd Edition, 2013), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment;
- *Making Sense of Place – Landscape Character Assessment Guidance* (2002) published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage; and
- *LANDMAP Methodology: Guidance for Wales* (2013) published by Natural Resources Wales.
- *LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas (2013)* published by Natural Resources Wales.

Surveys

4.2 Desktop surveys were carried out of published material on the landscape of the site and its wider context. Material included maps and LANDMAP data. Field studies enabled the recording of various landscape elements such as topography, land use and vegetation. From the analysis of this combination of material it was possible to carry out an evaluation of the existing characteristics of the landscape and the potential impacts of the proposed development. Site survey works and photography were carried out both as a desktop exercise and in the field in late January 2017.

Assumptions

4.3 Reference to “the site” should be considered as the area contained within the ‘red line’ to identify the planning application boundary.

4.4 All visual assessment field survey work has been from within publically accessible areas only: views from private properties and commercial buildings are approximate and have been estimated.

Viewpoints

4.5 A representative series of viewpoints were selected (see Figures 05-07 inclusive).

Landscape Sensitivity

4.6 The term landscape receptor means an element or a group of elements which will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Landscape receptors are physical elements or attributes of the landscape that could be affected by the development such as landscape character, landform, water courses, woodland or hedgerows, land uses and field boundaries.

4.7 Prior to the advent of the landscape character assessment procedure now used by local authorities, the sensitivity of landscape receptors were often defined in terms of landscape value which took the form of planning designations such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Areas of Great Landscape Value.

4.8 The sensitivity of landscape receptors is defined below:

Table 1: Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Sensitivity	Landscape type or feature
High	An area possessing a particularly distinctive sense of place, in good condition, or highly valued for its scenic quality and/or landscape character, for example National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts, Grade 1 listed buildings and historic parks; or an intact feature of high intrinsic value; [such as prominent trees or tree groups, forming a critical part of the landscape pattern or historic landscape pattern]; landscapes or features with a low tolerance to change of the type identified.
Medium	An area with a well-defined sense of place and/or character in moderate condition; or an area valued by designation at a local or regional level; or a partly damaged feature of high intrinsic value, or an intact feature of moderate intrinsic value [such as prominent trees or tree groups which contribute to the character of the site, screening of views, landscape or historic landscape pattern]; a landscape or feature which is partially tolerant of change of the type identified.
Low	An area with a poorly defined sense of place, and/or landscape character in poor condition, often not valued for its scenic quality; or a feature of low intrinsic value [such as trees and species poor hedges of no special quality or function]; or a landscape or feature that is tolerant of change of the type identified.

Magnitude of Landscape Impact

4.9 The criteria to assess the magnitude of landscape impacts (including those on

landscape character and historical landscape character and setting) are based upon the amount of physical change that will occur as a result of the proposals, as described in Table 2 below. These are based on best practice examples and experience:

Table 2: Magnitude of Landscape Impact

Category	Description
Major adverse landscape impact	The proposals will be at *complete variance* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape, and/or would *diminish or destroy* the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Moderate adverse landscape impact	The proposals will be *at odds* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and/or would cause a *noticeable diminution* of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Minor adverse landscape impact	The proposals will *not quite fit into* the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and/or would cause a *perceptible diminution* of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Negligible adverse landscape impact	The proposals will create a *perceptible deterioration* in the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape
No change	The proposals will *not cause any change* to the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape.
Negligible landscape benefit	The proposals will provide a *perceptible improvement* to the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape.
Minor landscape benefit	The proposals will achieve *a degree of fit* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and *go some way towards improving* the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape.
Moderate landscape benefit	The proposals *will fit well with* the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and would *noticeably improve* the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape
Major landscape benefit	The proposals *will fit very well* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and would *restore* the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

4.10 The term visual receptor means an element or group of elements that will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Visual receptors are publicly accessible viewpoints, the sensitivity of which would be dependent on the location, the activity of the viewer and the importance of the view. These would include viewpoints available to users of outdoor facilities, sporting activities and users of rights of way; viewpoints from landscape features and beauty spots; viewpoints outside local properties (which would represent the view for local residents); and viewpoints available to people travelling through the landscape. Views may be glimpsed or open.

4.11 The determination of sensitivity of the visual receptors is a matter of professional judgement. The Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Assessment recommend that the assessment of sensitivity will be dependent on:

- The location and context of a viewpoint;
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the viewer;
- The importance of the view (which may be determined with respect to its popularity or the numbers of people affected, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, and in the facilities provided for its enjoyment and references to it in literature or art);and
- The scale of the view and the extent of visibility.

Table 3: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Sensitivity	Visual Receptor
High	Viewers with a *particular interest* in their visual environment and/or prolonged viewing opportunities, for example residents or visitors to National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts or walkers on National Trails.
Medium	Viewers with *moderate interest* in their visual environment, for example residents or visitors to regionally or locally valued countryside, users of local open space facilities and walkers.
Low	Viewers with a *passing or momentary interest* in their everyday surroundings, for example motorists or people at their place of work, whose attention is focussed on other activities and are therefore less susceptible to change.

4.12 The magnitude of visual impacts depends on factors such as distance, the time of day, weather conditions, elevation and aspect, as well as the context of the view. The impact has been assessed during good visibility and light conditions, therefore with the best possible view of the proposals. The following scale has been adopted for the magnitude of visual impact, based on the degree of change to the view, or to the composition. This is based on best practice examples and experience.

Table 4: Magnitude of Visual Impact

Visual Impact Magnitude	Description
Major adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause *a dominant or complete change* to the composition of the view, the appreciation of the landscape character, the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Moderate adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause a *clearly noticeable change* to the view, which would affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Minor adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause a *perceptible change* to the view, but which would not materially affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Negligible adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause a *barely perceptible change* to the view, which would not affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character, or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the view.

Assessment of Significance

4.13 The scale shown in Table 5 below has been adopted to assess the significance of both landscape and visual impacts. The basis of this scale is derived from professional experience. In accordance with good practice only those impacts which are significant are described in this chapter, unless there are particular

reasons why moderately significant impacts are also relevant, for example where there are a large number of these

Table 5: Assessment of Landscape or Visual Significance

Sensitivity of Resource	**Major Impact or Benefit**	**Moderate Impact or Benefit**	**Minor Impact or Benefit**	**Negligible Impact or Benefit**	**Neutral Impact**
High	Major or severe	Moderate or major	Minor or moderate	Not Significant or minor	Not significant
Medium	Moderate or major	Minor or moderate	Not Significant or minor	Not Significant	Not significant
Low	Minor or moderate	Not Significant or minor	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not significant

5.0 Landscape Character Baseline

5.1 Rossett is a large village of approximately 3300 people Rossett is geographically located near to the Welsh and English border towns of Wrexham 6.5 miles (10.5 km) and Chester 7.5 miles (12.1 km). The village sits close to the Wales-England border and is built on the banks of the River Alyn which is a tributary of the River Dee one-and-a-half miles downstream.

Topography

5.2 This area is characterised by predominantly flat low lying land at approximately 10m AOD.

Existing site vegetation and site boundaries

5.3 The site consists of three fields, currently managed as grassland. The western and north western boundary is marked by hedgerow field boundary with several mature hedgerow trees that extend along Gamford Lane. There is a mixture of trees, hedges and woodland along the north eastern boundary. There is a length of hedgerow within the site that currently divides the northern and southern fields; the southern site boundary is defined by a post and wire fence. The wider area is characterised by the urban built form of Rosset to the west and north, with a loose mosaic of hedge bounded fields to the south and east.

Rights of Way and Land Accessible to the Public

5.4 No designated public rights of way cross the site.

5.5 There are three footpaths that pass within approximately 0.1km of the site – FP.ALL/22 that runs west of Gamford Lane adjacent to the western site boundary, FP.ALL/20 to the south of the site that runs south west from Gamford Lane along the southern boundary of the playing fields, and FP.ALL/16 that runs north of Darland Lane to the north of the site.

Public Roads

5.6 The most significant road in the vicinity is the hedgerow bordered Gamford Lane passing along the north and west of the site.

Landscape Character Assessment

5.7 Landscape character is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape and how people perceive it. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation and land-use, and human settlement. It creates the particular ‘sense of place’ of different areas of the landscape.

LANDMAP

5.8 The LANDMAP system has been developed specifically for the assessment of character in the landscape of Wales. The system was developed by CCW (now National Resources Wales) and implemented in partnership with Local Planning Authorities throughout Wales. LANDMAP, introduced in 1997, was revolutionised in 2003 with the introduction of a benchmark methodology and quality assurance process to ensure consistency, accuracy and accessibility of landscape information in Wales.

5.9 We have reviewed the Landscape Character of the site and its landscape context primarily using the most recent LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect data. Although there are five aspects within the LANDMAP data, the LANDMAP methodology for landscape characterisation notes that landscape character areas are to be defined using the Visual & Sensory Aspect Area as a starting point, then refined by examining the data from other Aspects. However, a summary of all five Aspects is illustrated in Appendix Figures 08 to 10. The following description is taken direct from the LANDMAP Collector data produced as part of the LANDMAP study for this area.

5.10 LANDMAP places the site within the large Visual and Sensory Aspect Area **Dee Terraces WRXHMVS054.** This area is classified as Flat Open Lowland Farmland, and the summary description is quoted below:

The area is characterised by clearly defined and well maintained arable farming landscape with narrow lanes, roadside and field ditches and ponds. Sensory perceptions include tranquillity, peacefulness, an efficient and industrious farming landscape, settled and feeling of being relatively remote from population and industry. Generally, due to the relative openness of the landscape there is an overwhelming sense of space and distance, with views usually far reaching and stretching to the far horizons. Settlements are typified by traditional red brick buildings and are often small in scale, some light pollution is evident from the adjacent settlements and in particular from industrial development at Wrexham Industrial Estate but this quickly diminishes with distance. There is a greater influence from roads and transport in this area as the area contains some of the main roads leading towards Whitchurch, Nantwich and Crewe their noise and activity further emphasised by the recent construction of the new access road used by heavy lorries leaving and entering Wrexham Industrial Estate to the west of the area.

5.11 LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of '*moderate'* value. The reasoning given for this is that:

Although attractive there is little which gives this area an element of rarity or importance as a valuable landscape type or area. Attractive and comfortable with a domestic almost suburban feel to its western extremities. The area appears well

maintained and managed with a diverse and attractive vegetation pattern. The area is unspoilt by large scale visually intrusive development. However there is pressure for farm diversification which has led to some unsympathetic developments. The area is a pleasant farming rural area both for the traveller and resident but is relatively unremarkable in its lack of strong defining or unique landscape features. It benefits from the lack of large scale or visually intrusive development but although attractive lacks the unique or unusual features that might make it of High or Outstanding value. [Our emphasis]

5.12 It should be noted that 4 of the 5 Aspect Area evaluations are 'moderate', including the Visual & Sensory Aspect Area. Only the Historic Landscape Aspect Area is evaluated as 'high'.

6.0 Description of Development Proposal

6.1 Ownership: The entire application site that comprises three fields is within the ownership of Mrs Taylor of the Bungalow.

6.2 Location: The application site is located on the south east of Rossett Village occupying a pocket of agricultural land between the east side of Gamford Lane and the access track to the Bungalow and the grounds of Darland Hall.

6.3 Area: The site area is approx. 2.3Ha / 5.68 acres

6.4 Use: The entire site is presently agricultural in character where the present use of the site is as grazing land.

6.5 Topography: The site level at c.10m AOD with no marked alterations in its topography.
To the west and north is Rossett Village (at c.10m AOD). To the east and south east the land is flat with a gentle fall 0f 5-6m to the River Dee that is c.3km to the south.

6.6 Boundaries: To the north the site the boundary is coincidental with that of the access track (that will be retained) to the Bungalow (the applicants property), and Darland Lodge (behind) and the wooded grounds of Darland Hall to the east.

The south-eastern boundary is presently marked only by a post and wire fence upon the open field matrix

The western boundary is mainly coincidental with Gamford Lane presently bounded by a continuous field hedge except for the section to the rear of a series of three properties (White Cottage, Westfiedl, Cartref and Barfield) that back on to the proposal site.

6.7 Existing Site Features / Vegetation: There are no notable features upon the site except for some relatively few trees, the matters relating to these are considered in more detail in the Arboricultural implications Assessment by Mulberry. The few small trees on the site are proposed removed. The hedgerow that extends from White Cottage is intended retained in sections where its retention can be accommodated.

6.8 Access: The existing field access close to Darland Lodge will not be maintained where the proposal includes a new main site access from Gamford Lane 30m south of this point. This new access will entail the removal of a section of hedgerow, (approx.120 linear metres), that will be replaced with a 2.0m width pavement with a replacement hedge behind. Two minor accesses are proposed to proposed properties on Gamford Lane.

6.9 Existing Services / Utilities: There are no existing utilities within the site except for an over ground BT line that runs approx. 10m parallel to Gamford Lane that will be re-located.

6.10 Public Rights of Way: There are no public access rights to any part of the proposal site. An informal link to the public footpath (FP ALL/22) will be provided as a link to the open spaces provided on the site.

6.11 Landscape designations: Those applying to the site are indicated on Fig 2 & 3.

6.12 Layout: An indicative layout of the site has been prepared and is shown on *Fig.4* and described as follows:

- The proposal is to construct 47 two-storey dwelling. The overall layout has been designed as a compatible response to the location at the edge of the village. An informal layout of dwellings is proposed where the house design will follow traditional motifs and the adoption of a vernacular style using traditional materials – brick, timber and natural stones. A variety of house styles are proposed where eaves, roof heights and alignments will be varied, with a view to providing a layout sympathetic to the village character, where built forms have evolved organically over time.

- Property divisions are proposed as timber fences and hedgerows. Extensive tree planting is proposed within the site and to the existing and proposed boundaries.

6.13 A variety of open spaces have been included that have been located to the boundaries of the site as a response to the location that will assimilate the proposal locally;

- To the north garden boundaries with trees separate the site from Darland Lodge.
- To the north east the grounds and formal garden of Darland Hall is separated by a swathe of open space
- To the south east a large tract of open space bounds the woodland of Darland Hall along with the open countryside to the south of the site
- All of the southern boundary will comprise a new hedgerow with specimen trees
- To the west, bordering the properties (White Cottage, Cartrel and Barfield) a substantial area of open space will be retained.
- The section of hedgerow (north of Barfield) will be replaced by a new hedgerow with trees planted inside of the proposed new pavement to this section of Gamford Lane

6.14 The overall intention of the softworks layout shall be to provide a substantial landscape scheme. This will include trees, hedgerows and gardens both internally and particularly to all the site boundaries, with a view to providing a green framework that will minimise the landscape and visual effects and assimilate the site within this urban edge landscape setting.

7.0 Predicted Landscape Effects of the Proposed Development

7.1 Landscape effects are defined as changes in the elements, characteristics, and qualities of the landscape as a result of development. These effects can be positive, negative or neutral. When identifying and assessing landscape change, it is important to take into account the existing trends for change within the landscape, which may be due to natural processes or human activities.

7.2 There will be effects on the landscape fabric of the site as a result of ground disturbance, temporary site buildings, machinery such as earthmovers, access tracks etc. Some of these areas will permanently change with the construction of new built form but for other areas the disturbance will be short term and surfaces will be restored to grass and native tree and hedgerow planting.

Effects on Landscape Character

7.3 The site is included just within the north western edge of the LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Area **Dee Terraces**. In the overall evaluation of '*moderate'* it is stated that *'there is little which gives this area an element of rarity or importance as a valuable landscape type or area'.*

7.4 The wider landscape has been identified as partially compromised as a result existing urban edge. The existing buildings along Gamford Lane in Rossett itself, and at White Cottage and Gamford Farm – and the school playing fields on the opposite side of Gamford Lane to the south west of the site - characterise the local landscape, and the site would be seen in this urban residential context. Furthermore, the site would respect the scale and pattern of the landscape by working within the existing field boundaries, which would be strengthened as part of the proposals. The new hedgerow and tree planting would contain native trees, in accordance with the management recommendations detailed for the **Dee Terraces** Visual and Sensory Aspect Area. For these reasons the overall balance of impact on this Aspect Area is assessed as *minor adverse.*

Physical Landscape Impacts on Topography

7.5 The site may require extremely minor adjustments to existing levels to accommodate the proposed development. These would be designed to work with the contours to minimise the cut and fill and fit comfortably in the landscape. The impact on topography would be very localised, and the development would have only a *negligible adverse* impact on landform.

Vegetation

7.6 There will be a loss of grassland, several trees and a length of hedgerow along Gamford Lane and within the site. All remaining hedgerows will however, be retained and, where necessary, gapped up with additional planting.

7.7 There will also be the addition of native tree and hedgerow planting along the southern boundary, and new hedgerow planting to replace the roadside hedgerow along the boundary with Gamford Lane.

7.8 There would be only minor losses of hedgerow to accommodate access routes.

7.9 For these reasons the overall landscape impact on vegetation is assessed as *minor adverse*.

Significance of Overall Landscape Effects

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

7.10 The site can be regarded as of *medium* landscape sensitivity.

Overall Magnitude of Change

7.11 The overall magnitude of change is regarded as *moderate* for the following reasons.

7.12 While there will be construction of buildings and other structures over existing pasture the development will be contained within existing field boundaries and proposed tree and hedgerow planting. The existing grain and mosaic pattern of the landscape will be respected. Furthermore, the change will be very largely confined to the immediate surrounds with little visibility in the wider landscape.

Overall Magnitude and Significance of Landscape Effect

7.13 Given the *medium* sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *moderate* magnitude of change, the impact on the landscape is regarded as *moderate adverse, reducing to minor to moderate* as the establishment of the internal and boundary landscape framework of tree and hedge planting increasingly assimilates the site into the broader landscape setting.

8.0 Predicted Visual Effects of the Proposed Development

General

8.1 Visual effects are defined as changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive (beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction). The assessment of visual effects describes:

- The changes in the character of the available views resulting from the development
- The changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptors

8.2 Field survey work has identified and mapped the approximate extent of the 'Zone of Visual Influence' of the proposed development. This is illustrated on *Fig 03.* Representative viewpoints have been selected that form the core of this visual assessment. The locations of these are shown on *Fig 03* and illustrated on *Fig 05 to 07.* These are described below.

8.3 The following visual receptors have been identified;

- *Users of the local public road network – Gamford Lane and Darland Lane*
- *Local residential occupiers – several houses in Rossett along Gamford Lane , including Strathyr and Springfield House*
- *Recreational receptors – users of the local footpaths FP.ALL/16, FP.ALL/20 and FP.ALL/22*

8.4 The following levels of receptor sensitivity have been ascribed for the purposes of this assessment:

- *All residential receptors* have *high visual sensitivity* where their main view is of the proposed development. The main view is assumed to be from ground-floor habitable rooms and from the curtilage of the property;
- Users of the local footpath network are considered to be of *medium sensitivity*
- *Travellers along the local access road network are considered to be of low visual sensitivity*, since their prime purpose is not considered to be recreational or enjoyment of the countryside.

Users of Public Road Network *(Fig 06 Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6)*

8.5 The minor road called Gamford Lane that passes to the west and north of the site would be affected. For the majority of its length the roadside hedge will effectively screen views. However, the removal of length of the hedgerow along the north western site boundary would allow views of the proposed development, particularly near the proposed site access at the junction of Gamford Lane and Darland Lane. For these reasons the visual effect during and immediately after

construction is estimated as *minor adverse* becoming *not significant* when mitigation planting becomes established.

Residential Receptors (*Fig 5 Viewpoint 2, Fig 06 Viewpoints 5 and 6, Fig 07 Viewpoint 7 and 8)*

8.6 There are several houses along Gamford Lane in Rossett that will have some views of the proposed site access and proposed housing in the north western edge of the site. The houses on Broadoaks that back on to Gamford Lane will have views of the proposed development predominantly screened by their rear garden close board fences and the existing roadside boundary hedgerow. There will be partially screened views from the rear of some residential properties to the west of the site along Gamford Lane including White Cottage. There may also be glimpsed views of the southern extent of the proposed development from Trevalyan Farm. For these reasons the overall visual effect during construction on residential receptors is estimated as *moderate to major adverse* during and immediately after construction becoming *minor to moderate adverse* when mitigation planting – a new hedge along the proposed roadside pavement, tree planting along the western and southern boundaries – becomes established. However, these visual effects must be considered in the context of the current urban edge setting.

Recreational Receptors *(Fig 06 Viewpoints 4 and 5)*

8.7 There are no designated rights of way across the site.

8.8 FP.ALL/22 runs west of Gamford Lane adjacent to the western site boundary, and there would be views from a short section of this footpath where it meets Gamford Lane of the western site area due to the removal of the roadside hedge. FP.ALL/20 to the south of the site runs south west from Gamford Lane along the southern side of the 2.5m hedge boundary of the playing fields, and views are only available from Gamford Lane over the roadside hedge to the southern site area. FP.ALL/16 runs north of Darland Lane to the north of the site and views are completely screened by intervening built form and vegetation. Development of the proposed site would be visible in these views but it would be seen in the context of the adjacent houses along Gamford Lane and viewed against a background of mature trees and existing buildings. The overall visual effect on recreational receptors is therefore assessed as *moderate adverse* during and after construction becoming *minor adverse* when mitigation planting – new hedge along proposed roadside pavement, and tree and hedge planting along the southern boundary – is established.

Valued views and settings

8.9 The Grade II listed building of Darland Hall lies approximately 50m north east of the site. However, the intervening buildings and vegetation would predominantly screen views of the site. For these reasons the visual effect is assessed as *minor adverse* reducing to *negligible adverse* when the proposed tree and hedge planting is established.

9.0 Residual Effects Assessment

9.1 Residual effects are those that are predicted to remain after implementation of the mitigation measures described above. The means of reducing these impacts is twofold and in line with Technical Advice Note 12: *Design* (2014); a sympathetic design of the dwellings in terms of design and materials so that the buildings form a cohesive part of the local built form environment, and secondly through the landscape works where the intention would be to assimilate the site via sensitive planting into the broader landscape setting. These proposals are illustrated indicatively on the Site Layout Plan *Fig 04.*

9.2 Given the *medium* sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *moderate* landscape magnitude of change the overall residual effect on the landscape is regarded as *minor to moderate adverse*.

9.3 The overall residual visual effect of the development is assessed as *minor to moderate adverse* for residential receptors and *minor adverse* for recreational receptors.

10.0 Summary / Conclusions

Planning Policy

10.1 The effect of the proposed development against aspects of planning policy, are summarised below:

- Technical Advice Note 12: DESIGN provides guidance on various issues to be considered when developing a project design including landscape. This LVIA concludes that the strategy for the proposed development follows this design guidance by carefully studying the context of the site, and by preparing a design strategy where new landscape is created to integrate the setting of the new development. From the conceptual stage, the proposed development takes forward the conservation and enhancement of existing landscape elements within and adjacent to the site's boundary;
- Unitary Development Plan, POLICY EC1 –the proposed development sits within existing built form to the west north and north east. The visual assessment has demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse effect on the landscape or visual amenity, no coalescence with adjacent settlement, and only a localised effect on the openness of the area;
- Unitary Development Plan, POLICY EC5 – As a result of the design iterations of the masterplan, the proposed development will not adversely affect the landscape features of this part of the Special Landscape Area. Furthermore, we have demonstrated that the landscape character within the site area has already been significantly affected by its proximity to the urban area of Rossett. The siting and design of the proposed development will also have no adverse effect on the wider landscape character within the SLA to the south and east.

Landscape Effects

There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on features of importance to landscape or nature conservation. The development will result in a localised *moderate to minor* residual adverse effect on the landscape character of a small area that lies just within the SLA.

The proposed development will also have no major or moderate adverse residual effect on the wider landscape character of landscape within the SLA to the south and east.

Visual Effects

There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on the visual amenity of recreational receptors or residential receptors, within the SLA itself.

There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on recreational or residential receptors that lie outside the SLA.

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

Proposed Residential Development

at

Gamford Lane, Rossett, Wrexham, LL12 0BA

For

Land Planning

January 2017

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Contents

1.0 Executive Summary

2.0 Introduction

3.0 Planning Policy Context

4.0 Methodology

5.0 Landscape Character Baseline Conditions

6.0 Description of Development Proposal

7.0 Predicted Landscape Effects of the Proposed Development and Mitigation

8.0 Predicted Visual Effects of the Proposed Development and Mitigation

9.0 Residual Effects

10.0 Summary / Conclusions

Illustrations

Fig 01 Site Location

Fig 02 Landscape Planning Designations

Fig 03 Landscape Context and Theoretical Zone of Visual Influence

Fig 04 Proposed Site Layout

Fig 05 Viewpoints 1 and 2

Fig 06 Viewpoints 3, 4, 5 and 6

Fig 07 Viewpoints 7 and 8

Fig 08 LANDMAP Cultural and Geological Landscapes Aspects

Fig 09 LANDMAP Historic Landscape and Landscape Habitats Aspects

Fig 10 LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report describes the landscape and visual context of the site at Gamford Lane, Rossett, and provides an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development, in accordance with current guidance.

1.2 The report describes the site in terms of its features based on a thorough review of LANDMAP data, the Welsh landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences are recorded and evaluated (LANDMAP Natural Resources Wales). The proposed site is located within a landscape classified as flat open lowland farmland (LANDMAP Visual & Sensory Dee Terraces WRXHMVS054). The site has the following relevant local landscape planning designations:

- Wrexham UDP Policy EC1 Green Barriers Policy
- Wrexham UDP Policy EC5 Special Landscape Areas

1.3 The application site is located on the south east of Rossett Village occupying a pocket of agricultural land between the east side of Gamford Lane and the access track to the Bungalow and the grounds of Darland Hall. The site is well contained by built form to the west and north, as the site lies contiguous with the settlement boundary along its north western and northern site boundaries.

1.4 Given the *medium* sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *moderate* magnitude of change, the overall residual effect on the landscape is regarded as *minor to moderate adverse.*

1.5 The overall residual visual effect of the development is assessed as *minor to moderate adverse* for residential receptors and *minor* adverse for recreational receptors.

1.6 Proposed mitigation will include a landscape scheme of trees, hedgerows and gardens both internally and to all site boundaries, with a view to providing a green framework that will minimise the landscape and visual effects and assimilate the site within this urban edge landscape setting.

1.7 There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on features of importance to landscape or nature conservation. The development will result in a localised *moderate to minor* residual adverse effect on the landscape character of a small area that lies just within the SLA.

1.8 There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on the visual amenity of recreational receptors or residential receptors, within or outside the SLA.

1.9 Given the findings of our assessment, it is our opinion that this is a suitable location for the proposed development given the design and mitigation measures.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 This landscape and visual appraisal (LVIA) has been produced in support of an outline planning application with all matters reserved with regard to the proposed development of land at Gamford Lane, Rossett, Wrexham on behalf of Land Planning, Malpas.

2.2 The LVIA has been undertaken in accordance with the current Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA[1]).

2.3 The location and extent of the site is indicated on *Fig 01*.

[1]*Guidelines for Landscape &Visual Impact Assessment;* Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment; 3rd Edition 2013

3.0 Planning Policy context

3.1 This section highlights the aspects of planning policy which are relevant to the landscape appraisal of the proposed development. [refer *Fig 02*]

National Landscape Planning Related Policy

3.2 The relevant national planning policy framework is provided principally by Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 9 November 2016). This document refers to Special Landscape Areas, and states at para. 5.3.11:

"*Non statutory designations, such as Special Landscape Areas…should be soundly based on a formal scientific assessment of the nature conservation, landscape or geological value of the site. Local non-statutory sites can add value to the planning process particularly if such designations are informed by community participation and reflect community values. Local planning authorities should apply these designations to areas of substantive conservation value where there is good reason to believe that normal planning policies cannot provide the necessary protection. Such designations should not unduly restrict acceptable development."* [My added emphasis]

3.3 Technical Advice Note 12: *Design* provides guidance on various issues to be considered when developing a project design including landscape. This document states in para. 5.5.2 that:

'In general terms, good design will almost always be dependent on working within the natural constraints and the historic character of the landscape and this should be the starting point from which the design of development evolves. The aim should be to achieve good design solutions which maximise the natural landscape assets and minimise environmental impact on the landscape.'

RRA commentary on how development relates to policy

This LVIA concludes that the strategy for the proposed development follows this design guidance. The context of the site has been considered carefully and a design strategy prepared to integrate the new development into it surroundings.

Wrexham Unitary Development Plan Landscape Planning Related Policy

3.4 Planning Policy is interpreted at a more local level by the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (UDP), Adopted February 2005. The policies of most relevance to landscape issues are:

Policy EC1 Green Barriers

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.

The purposes of a Green Barrier include:
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.*

RRA commentary on how development relates to policy

This LVIA concludes that the strategy for the proposed development will not result in any coalescence with other settlements. The location of the site within existing built form on three sides, will result in a 'rounding off' the urban area between Gamford Lane and the woodland south of Darland Hall, and not encroach into the wider countryside. Furthermore, there will be no significant adverse effects on the visual amenity of the residential and recreational receptors.

Policy EC5 Special Landscape Areas

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.

RRA commentary on how development relates to policy

It is our opinion, based upon our review of the LANDMAP data – and in particular the Visual and Sensory Aspect Area Dee Terraces - and from our detailed site survey, that the key qualities of the landscape within the SLA in this locale have already been partially compromised by the adjacent built form and urban edge of Rossett, and that the integrity of the wider SLA would not be significantly affected by the proposed development given the proposed tree and hedgerow planting along the southern boundary, and within the site itself.

With reference to the LANDMAP Special Landscape Area Guidance,[2] this describes the methodology in identifying SLA's as below:

> *'The broad search areas are determined from the five LANDMAP Evaluated Aspects: the Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual & Sensory, the Historic Landscape and the Cultural Landscape.* ***The LANDMAP overall evaluation score and LANDMAP evaluation criteria for each evaluated aspect layer will be particularly informative at this stage****.'* (Our emphasis)

We note that the LANDMAP overall evaluations that from a key part in defining SLAs are predominantly 'moderate' for the site itself; however we observe that these evaluations do increase in some of the adjacent Aspect Areas to the south east, suggesting that the site itself lies within an area that does not fully exhibit the key qualities of the designated SLA.

[2] *LANDMAP Guidance Note 1;* LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas, 2013

4.0 Methodology

General

4.1 A methodological framework has been used for this initial landscape and visual assessment based on the broad principles of following documents:

- *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact assessment (GLVIA)* (3rd Edition, 2013), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment;
- *Making Sense of Place – Landscape Character Assessment Guidance* (2002) published by the Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage; and
- *LANDMAP Methodology: Guidance for Wales* (2013) published by Natural Resources Wales.
- *LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas (2013)* published by Natural Resources Wales.

Surveys

4.2 Desktop surveys were carried out of published material on the landscape of the site and its wider context. Material included maps and LANDMAP data. Field studies enabled the recording of various landscape elements such as topography, land use and vegetation. From the analysis of this combination of material it was possible to carry out an evaluation of the existing characteristics of the landscape and the potential impacts of the proposed development. Site survey works and photography were carried out both as a desktop exercise and in the field in late January 2017.

Assumptions

4.3 Reference to “the site” should be considered as the area contained within the ‘red line’ to identify the planning application boundary.

4.4 All visual assessment field survey work has been from within publically accessible areas only: views from private properties and commercial buildings are approximate and have been estimated.

Viewpoints

4.5 A representative series of viewpoints were selected (see Figures 05-07 inclusive).

Landscape Sensitivity

4.6 The term landscape receptor means an element or a group of elements which will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Landscape receptors are physical elements or attributes of the landscape that could be affected by the development such as landscape character, landform, water courses, woodland or hedgerows, land uses and field boundaries.

4.7 Prior to the advent of the landscape character assessment procedure now used by local authorities, the sensitivity of landscape receptors were often defined in terms of landscape value which took the form of planning designations such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and Areas of Great Landscape Value.

4.8 The sensitivity of landscape receptors is defined below:

Table 1: Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Sensitivity	Landscape type or feature
High	An area possessing a particularly distinctive sense of place, in good condition, or highly valued for its scenic quality and/or landscape character, for example National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts, Grade 1 listed buildings and historic parks; or an intact feature of high intrinsic value; [such as prominent trees or tree groups, forming a critical part of the landscape pattern or historic landscape pattern]; landscapes or features with a low tolerance to change of the type identified.
Medium	An area with a well-defined sense of place and/or character in moderate condition; or an area valued by designation at a local or regional level; or a partly damaged feature of high intrinsic value, or an intact feature of moderate intrinsic value [such as prominent trees or tree groups which contribute to the character of the site, screening of views, landscape or historic landscape pattern]; a landscape or feature which is partially tolerant of change of the type identified.
Low	An area with a poorly defined sense of place, and/or landscape character in poor condition, often not valued for its scenic quality; or a feature of low intrinsic value [such as trees and species poor hedges of no special quality or function]; or a landscape or feature that is tolerant of change of the type identified.

Magnitude of Landscape Impact

4.9 The criteria to assess the magnitude of landscape impacts (including those on

landscape character and historical landscape character and setting) are based upon the amount of physical change that will occur as a result of the proposals, as described in Table 2 below. These are based on best practice examples and experience:

Table 2: Magnitude of Landscape Impact

Category	Description
Major adverse landscape impact	The proposals will be at *complete variance* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape, and/or would *diminish or destroy* the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Moderate adverse landscape impact	The proposals will be *at odds* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and/or would cause a *noticeable diminution* of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Minor adverse landscape impact	The proposals will *not quite fit into* the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and/or would cause a *perceptible diminution* of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Negligible adverse landscape impact	The proposals will create a *perceptible deterioration* in the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape
No change	The proposals will *not cause any change* to the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape.
Negligible landscape benefit	The proposals will provide a *perceptible improvement* to the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape.
Minor landscape benefit	The proposals will achieve *a degree of fit* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and *go some way towards improving* the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape.
Moderate landscape benefit	The proposals *will fit well with* the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and would *noticeably improve* the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape
Major landscape benefit	The proposals *will fit very well* with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and would *restore* the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

4.10 The term visual receptor means an element or group of elements that will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Visual receptors are publicly accessible viewpoints, the sensitivity of which would be dependent on the location, the activity of the viewer and the importance of the view. These would include viewpoints available to users of outdoor facilities, sporting activities and users of rights of way; viewpoints from landscape features and beauty spots; viewpoints outside local properties (which would represent the view for local residents); and viewpoints available to people travelling through the landscape. Views may be glimpsed or open.

4.11 The determination of sensitivity of the visual receptors is a matter of professional judgement. The Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Assessment recommend that the assessment of sensitivity will be dependent on:

- The location and context of a viewpoint;
- The expectations and occupation or activity of the viewer;
- The importance of the view (which may be determined with respect to its popularity or the numbers of people affected, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, and in the facilities provided for its enjoyment and references to it in literature or art);and
- The scale of the view and the extent of visibility.

Table 3: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Sensitivity	Visual Receptor
High	Viewers with a *particular interest* in their visual environment and/or prolonged viewing opportunities, for example residents or visitors to National Parks, AONBs, Heritage Coasts or walkers on National Trails.
Medium	Viewers with *moderate interest* in their visual environment, for example residents or visitors to regionally or locally valued countryside, users of local open space facilities and walkers.
Low	Viewers with a *passing or momentary interest* in their everyday surroundings, for example motorists or people at their place of work, whose attention is focussed on other activities and are therefore less susceptible to change.

4.12 The magnitude of visual impacts depends on factors such as distance, the time of day, weather conditions, elevation and aspect, as well as the context of the view. The impact has been assessed during good visibility and light conditions, therefore with the best possible view of the proposals. The following scale has been adopted for the magnitude of visual impact, based on the degree of change to the view, or to the composition. This is based on best practice examples and experience.

Table 4: Magnitude of Visual Impact

Visual Impact Magnitude	Description
Major adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause *a dominant or complete change* to the composition of the view, the appreciation of the landscape character, the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Moderate adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause a *clearly noticeable change* to the view, which would affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Minor adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause a *perceptible change* to the view, but which would not materially affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
Negligible adverse or beneficial visual impact	The proposals will cause a *barely perceptible change* to the view, which would not affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character, or the ability to take or enjoy the view.
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the view.

Assessment of Significance

4.13 The scale shown in Table 5 below has been adopted to assess the significance of both landscape and visual impacts. The basis of this scale is derived from professional experience. In accordance with good practice only those impacts which are significant are described in this chapter, unless there are particular

reasons why moderately significant impacts are also relevant, for example where there are a large number of these

Table 5: Assessment of Landscape or Visual Significance

Sensitivity of Resource	**Major Impact or Benefit**	**Moderate Impact or Benefit**	**Minor Impact or Benefit**	**Negligible Impact or Benefit**	**Neutral Impact**
High	Major or severe	Moderate or major	Minor or moderate	Not Significant or minor	Not significant
Medium	Moderate or major	Minor or moderate	Not Significant or minor	Not Significant	Not significant
Low	Minor or moderate	Not Significant or minor	Not Significant	Not Significant	Not significant

5.0 Landscape Character Baseline

5.1 Rossett is a large village of approximately 3300 people Rossett is geographically located near to the Welsh and English border towns of Wrexham 6.5 miles (10.5 km) and Chester 7.5 miles (12.1 km). The village sits close to the Wales-England border and is built on the banks of the River Alyn which is a tributary of the River Dee one-and-a-half miles downstream.

Topography

5.2 This area is characterised by predominantly flat low lying land at approximately 10m AOD.

Existing site vegetation and site boundaries

5.3 The site consists of three fields, currently managed as grassland. The western and north western boundary is marked by hedgerow field boundary with several mature hedgerow trees that extend along Gamford Lane. There is a mixture of trees, hedges and woodland along the north eastern boundary. There is a length of hedgerow within the site that currently divides the northern and southern fields; the southern site boundary is defined by a post and wire fence. The wider area is characterised by the urban built form of Rosset to the west and north, with a loose mosaic of hedge bounded fields to the south and east.

Rights of Way and Land Accessible to the Public

5.4 No designated public rights of way cross the site.

5.5 There are three footpaths that pass within approximately 0.1km of the site – FP.ALL/22 that runs west of Gamford Lane adjacent to the western site boundary, FP.ALL/20 to the south of the site that runs south west from Gamford Lane along the southern boundary of the playing fields, and FP.ALL/16 that runs north of Darland Lane to the north of the site.

Public Roads

5.6 The most significant road in the vicinity is the hedgerow bordered Gamford Lane passing along the north and west of the site.

Landscape Character Assessment

5.7 Landscape character is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a particular type of landscape and how people perceive it. It reflects particular combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation and land-use, and human settlement. It creates the particular ‘sense of place’ of different areas of the landscape.

LANDMAP

5.8 The LANDMAP system has been developed specifically for the assessment of character in the landscape of Wales. The system was developed by CCW (now National Resources Wales) and implemented in partnership with Local Planning Authorities throughout Wales. LANDMAP, introduced in 1997, was revolutionised in 2003 with the introduction of a benchmark methodology and quality assurance process to ensure consistency, accuracy and accessibility of landscape information in Wales.

5.9 We have reviewed the Landscape Character of the site and its landscape context primarily using the most recent LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect data. Although there are five aspects within the LANDMAP data, the LANDMAP methodology for landscape characterisation notes that landscape character areas are to be defined using the Visual & Sensory Aspect Area as a starting point, then refined by examining the data from other Aspects. However, a summary of all five Aspects is illustrated in Appendix Figures 08 to 10. The following description is taken direct from the LANDMAP Collector data produced as part of the LANDMAP study for this area.

5.10 LANDMAP places the site within the large Visual and Sensory Aspect Area **Dee Terraces WRXHMVS054.** This area is classified as Flat Open Lowland Farmland, and the summary description is quoted below:

The area is characterised by clearly defined and well maintained arable farming landscape with narrow lanes, roadside and field ditches and ponds. Sensory perceptions include tranquillity, peacefulness, an efficient and industrious farming landscape, settled and feeling of being relatively remote from population and industry. Generally, due to the relative openness of the landscape there is an overwhelming sense of space and distance, with views usually far reaching and stretching to the far horizons. Settlements are typified by traditional red brick buildings and are often small in scale, some light pollution is evident from the adjacent settlements and in particular from industrial development at Wrexham Industrial Estate but this quickly diminishes with distance. There is a greater influence from roads and transport in this area as the area contains some of the main roads leading towards Whitchurch, Nantwich and Crewe their noise and activity further emphasised by the recent construction of the new access road used by heavy lorries leaving and entering Wrexham Industrial Estate to the west of the area.

5.11 LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of '*moderate'* value. The reasoning given for this is that:

Although attractive there is little which gives this area an element of rarity or importance as a valuable landscape type or area. Attractive and comfortable with a domestic almost suburban feel to its western extremities. The area appears well

maintained and managed with a diverse and attractive vegetation pattern. The area is unspoilt by large scale visually intrusive development. However there is pressure for farm diversification which has led to some unsympathetic developments. The area is a pleasant farming rural area both for the traveller and resident but is relatively unremarkable in its lack of strong defining or unique landscape features. It benefits from the lack of large scale or visually intrusive development but although attractive lacks the unique or unusual features that might make it of High or Outstanding value. [Our emphasis]

5.12 It should be noted that 4 of the 5 Aspect Area evaluations are 'moderate', including the Visual & Sensory Aspect Area. Only the Historic Landscape Aspect Area is evaluated as 'high'.

6.0 Description of Development Proposal

6.1 Ownership: The entire application site that comprises three fields is within the ownership of Mrs Taylor of the Bungalow.

6.2 Location: The application site is located on the south east of Rossett Village occupying a pocket of agricultural land between the east side of Gamford Lane and the access track to the Bungalow and the grounds of Darland Hall.

6.3 Area: The site area is approx. 2.3Ha / 5.68 acres

6.4 Use: The entire site is presently agricultural in character where the present use of the site is as grazing land.

6.5 Topography: The site level at c.10m AOD with no marked alterations in its topography.
To the west and north is Rossett Village (at c.10m AOD). To the east and south east the land is flat with a gentle fall 0f 5-6m to the River Dee that is c.3km to the south.

6.6 Boundaries: To the north the site the boundary is coincidental with that of the access track (that will be retained) to the Bungalow (the applicants property), and Darland Lodge (behind) and the wooded grounds of Darland Hall to the east.

The south-eastern boundary is presently marked only by a post and wire fence upon the open field matrix

The western boundary is mainly coincidental with Gamford Lane presently bounded by a continuous field hedge except for the section to the rear of a series of three properties (White Cottage, Westfiedl, Cartref and Barfield) that back on to the proposal site.

6.7 Existing Site Features / Vegetation: There are no notable features upon the site except for some relatively few trees, the matters relating to these are considered in more detail in the Arboricultural implications Assessment by Mulberry. The few small trees on the site are proposed removed. The hedgerow that extends from White Cottage is intended retained in sections where its retention can be accommodated.

6.8 Access: The existing field access close to Darland Lodge will not be maintained where the proposal includes a new main site access from Gamford Lane 30m south of this point. This new access will entail the removal of a section of hedgerow, (approx.120 linear metres), that will be replaced with a 2.0m width pavement with a replacement hedge behind. Two minor accesses are proposed to proposed properties on Gamford Lane.

6.9 Existing Services / Utilities: There are no existing utilities within the site except for an over ground BT line that runs approx. 10m parallel to Gamford Lane that will be re-located.

6.10 Public Rights of Way: There are no public access rights to any part of the proposal site. An informal link to the public footpath (FP ALL/22) will be provided as a link to the open spaces provided on the site.

6.11 Landscape designations: Those applying to the site are indicated on Fig 2 & 3.

6.12 Layout: An indicative layout of the site has been prepared and is shown on *Fig.4* and described as follows:

- The proposal is to construct 47 two-storey dwelling. The overall layout has been designed as a compatible response to the location at the edge of the village. An informal layout of dwellings is proposed where the house design will follow traditional motifs and the adoption of a vernacular style using traditional materials – brick, timber and natural stones. A variety of house styles are proposed where eaves, roof heights and alignments will be varied, with a view to providing a layout sympathetic to the village character, where built forms have evolved organically over time.

- Property divisions are proposed as timber fences and hedgerows. Extensive tree planting is proposed within the site and to the existing and proposed boundaries.

6.13 A variety of open spaces have been included that have been located to the boundaries of the site as a response to the location that will assimilate the proposal locally;

- To the north garden boundaries with trees separate the site from Darland Lodge.
- To the north east the grounds and formal garden of Darland Hall is separated by a swathe of open space
- To the south east a large tract of open space bounds the woodland of Darland Hall along with the open countryside to the south of the site
- All of the southern boundary will comprise a new hedgerow with specimen trees
- To the west, bordering the properties (White Cottage, Cartrel and Barfield) a substantial area of open space will be retained.
- The section of hedgerow (north of Barfield) will be replaced by a new hedgerow with trees planted inside of the proposed new pavement to this section of Gamford Lane

6.14 The overall intention of the softworks layout shall be to provide a substantial landscape scheme. This will include trees, hedgerows and gardens both internally and particularly to all the site boundaries, with a view to providing a green framework that will minimise the landscape and visual effects and assimilate the site within this urban edge landscape setting.

7.0 Predicted Landscape Effects of the Proposed Development

7.1 Landscape effects are defined as changes in the elements, characteristics, and qualities of the landscape as a result of development. These effects can be positive, negative or neutral. When identifying and assessing landscape change, it is important to take into account the existing trends for change within the landscape, which may be due to natural processes or human activities.

7.2 There will be effects on the landscape fabric of the site as a result of ground disturbance, temporary site buildings, machinery such as earthmovers, access tracks etc. Some of these areas will permanently change with the construction of new built form but for other areas the disturbance will be short term and surfaces will be restored to grass and native tree and hedgerow planting.

Effects on Landscape Character

7.3 The site is included just within the north western edge of the LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Area **Dee Terraces**. In the overall evaluation of '*moderate'* it is stated that *'there is little which gives this area an element of rarity or importance as a valuable landscape type or area'.*

7.4 The wider landscape has been identified as partially compromised as a result existing urban edge. The existing buildings along Gamford Lane in Rossett itself, and at White Cottage and Gamford Farm – and the school playing fields on the opposite side of Gamford Lane to the south west of the site - characterise the local landscape, and the site would be seen in this urban residential context. Furthermore, the site would respect the scale and pattern of the landscape by working within the existing field boundaries, which would be strengthened as part of the proposals. The new hedgerow and tree planting would contain native trees, in accordance with the management recommendations detailed for the **Dee Terraces** Visual and Sensory Aspect Area. For these reasons the overall balance of impact on this Aspect Area is assessed as *minor adverse.*

Physical Landscape Impacts on Topography

7.5 The site may require extremely minor adjustments to existing levels to accommodate the proposed development. These would be designed to work with the contours to minimise the cut and fill and fit comfortably in the landscape. The impact on topography would be very localised, and the development would have only a *negligible adverse* impact on landform.

Vegetation

7.6 There will be a loss of grassland, several trees and a length of hedgerow along Gamford Lane and within the site. All remaining hedgerows will however, be retained and, where necessary, gapped up with additional planting.

7.7 There will also be the addition of native tree and hedgerow planting along the southern boundary, and new hedgerow planting to replace the roadside hedgerow along the boundary with Gamford Lane.

7.8 There would be only minor losses of hedgerow to accommodate access routes.

7.9 For these reasons the overall landscape impact on vegetation is assessed as *minor adverse*.

Significance of Overall Landscape Effects

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

7.10 The site can be regarded as of *medium* landscape sensitivity.

Overall Magnitude of Change

7.11 The overall magnitude of change is regarded as *moderate* for the following reasons.

7.12 While there will be construction of buildings and other structures over existing pasture the development will be contained within existing field boundaries and proposed tree and hedgerow planting. The existing grain and mosaic pattern of the landscape will be respected. Furthermore, the change will be very largely confined to the immediate surrounds with little visibility in the wider landscape.

Overall Magnitude and Significance of Landscape Effect

7.13 Given the *medium* sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *moderate* magnitude of change, the impact on the landscape is regarded as *moderate adverse, reducing to minor to moderate* as the establishment of the internal and boundary landscape framework of tree and hedge planting increasingly assimilates the site into the broader landscape setting.

8.0 Predicted Visual Effects of the Proposed Development

General

8.1 Visual effects are defined as changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive (beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction). The assessment of visual effects describes:

- The changes in the character of the available views resulting from the development
- The changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptors

8.2 Field survey work has identified and mapped the approximate extent of the 'Zone of Visual Influence' of the proposed development. This is illustrated on *Fig 03.* Representative viewpoints have been selected that form the core of this visual assessment. The locations of these are shown on *Fig 03* and illustrated on *Fig 05 to 07.* These are described below.

8.3 The following visual receptors have been identified;

- *Users of the local public road network – Gamford Lane and Darland Lane*
- *Local residential occupiers – several houses in Rossett along Gamford Lane , including Strathyr and Springfield House*
- *Recreational receptors – users of the local footpaths FP.ALL/16, FP.ALL/20 and FP.ALL/22*

8.4 The following levels of receptor sensitivity have been ascribed for the purposes of this assessment:

- *All residential receptors* have *high visual sensitivity* where their main view is of the proposed development. The main view is assumed to be from ground-floor habitable rooms and from the curtilage of the property;
- Users of the local footpath network are considered to be of *medium sensitivity*
- *Travellers along the local access road network are considered to be of low visual sensitivity*, since their prime purpose is not considered to be recreational or enjoyment of the countryside.

Users of Public Road Network *(Fig 06 Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6)*

8.5 The minor road called Gamford Lane that passes to the west and north of the site would be affected. For the majority of its length the roadside hedge will effectively screen views. However, the removal of length of the hedgerow along the north western site boundary would allow views of the proposed development, particularly near the proposed site access at the junction of Gamford Lane and Darland Lane. For these reasons the visual effect during and immediately after

construction is estimated as *minor adverse* becoming *not significant* when mitigation planting becomes established.

Residential Receptors (*Fig 5 Viewpoint 2, Fig 06 Viewpoints 5 and 6, Fig 07 Viewpoint 7 and 8)*

8.6 There are several houses along Gamford Lane in Rossett that will have some views of the proposed site access and proposed housing in the north western edge of the site. The houses on Broadoaks that back on to Gamford Lane will have views of the proposed development predominantly screened by their rear garden close board fences and the existing roadside boundary hedgerow. There will be partially screened views from the rear of some residential properties to the west of the site along Gamford Lane including White Cottage. There may also be glimpsed views of the southern extent of the proposed development from Trevalyan Farm. For these reasons the overall visual effect during construction on residential receptors is estimated as *moderate to major adverse* during and immediately after construction becoming *minor to moderate adverse* when mitigation planting – a new hedge along the proposed roadside pavement, tree planting along the western and southern boundaries – becomes established. However, these visual effects must be considered in the context of the current urban edge setting.

Recreational Receptors *(Fig 06 Viewpoints 4 and 5)*

8.7 There are no designated rights of way across the site.

8.8 FP.ALL/22 runs west of Gamford Lane adjacent to the western site boundary, and there would be views from a short section of this footpath where it meets Gamford Lane of the western site area due to the removal of the roadside hedge. FP.ALL/20 to the south of the site runs south west from Gamford Lane along the southern side of the 2.5m hedge boundary of the playing fields, and views are only available from Gamford Lane over the roadside hedge to the southern site area. FP.ALL/16 runs north of Darland Lane to the north of the site and views are completely screened by intervening built form and vegetation. Development of the proposed site would be visible in these views but it would be seen in the context of the adjacent houses along Gamford Lane and viewed against a background of mature trees and existing buildings. The overall visual effect on recreational receptors is therefore assessed as *moderate adverse* during and after construction becoming *minor adverse* when mitigation planting – new hedge along proposed roadside pavement, and tree and hedge planting along the southern boundary – is established.

Valued views and settings

8.9 The Grade II listed building of Darland Hall lies approximately 50m north east of the site. However, the intervening buildings and vegetation would predominantly screen views of the site. For these reasons the visual effect is assessed as *minor adverse* reducing to *negligible adverse* when the proposed tree and hedge planting is established.

9.0 Residual Effects Assessment

9.1 Residual effects are those that are predicted to remain after implementation of the mitigation measures described above. The means of reducing these impacts is twofold and in line with Technical Advice Note 12: *Design* (2014); a sympathetic design of the dwellings in terms of design and materials so that the buildings form a cohesive part of the local built form environment, and secondly through the landscape works where the intention would be to assimilate the site via sensitive planting into the broader landscape setting. These proposals are illustrated indicatively on the Site Layout Plan *Fig 04.*

9.2 Given the *medium* sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *moderate* landscape magnitude of change the overall residual effect on the landscape is regarded as *minor to moderate adverse*.

9.3 The overall residual visual effect of the development is assessed as *minor to moderate adverse* for residential receptors and *minor adverse* for recreational receptors.

10.0 Summary / Conclusions

Planning Policy

10.1 The effect of the proposed development against aspects of planning policy, are summarised below:

- Technical Advice Note 12: DESIGN provides guidance on various issues to be considered when developing a project design including landscape. This LVIA concludes that the strategy for the proposed development follows this design guidance by carefully studying the context of the site, and by preparing a design strategy where new landscape is created to integrate the setting of the new development. From the conceptual stage, the proposed development takes forward the conservation and enhancement of existing landscape elements within and adjacent to the site's boundary;
- Unitary Development Plan, POLICY EC1 –the proposed development sits within existing built form to the west north and north east. The visual assessment has demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse effect on the landscape or visual amenity, no coalescence with adjacent settlement, and only a localised effect on the openness of the area;
- Unitary Development Plan, POLICY EC5 – As a result of the design iterations of the masterplan, the proposed development will not adversely affect the landscape features of this part of the Special Landscape Area. Furthermore, we have demonstrated that the landscape character within the site area has already been significantly affected by its proximity to the urban area of Rossett. The siting and design of the proposed development will also have no adverse effect on the wider landscape character within the SLA to the south and east.

Landscape Effects

There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on features of importance to landscape or nature conservation. The development will result in a localised *moderate to minor* residual adverse effect on the landscape character of a small area that lies just within the SLA.

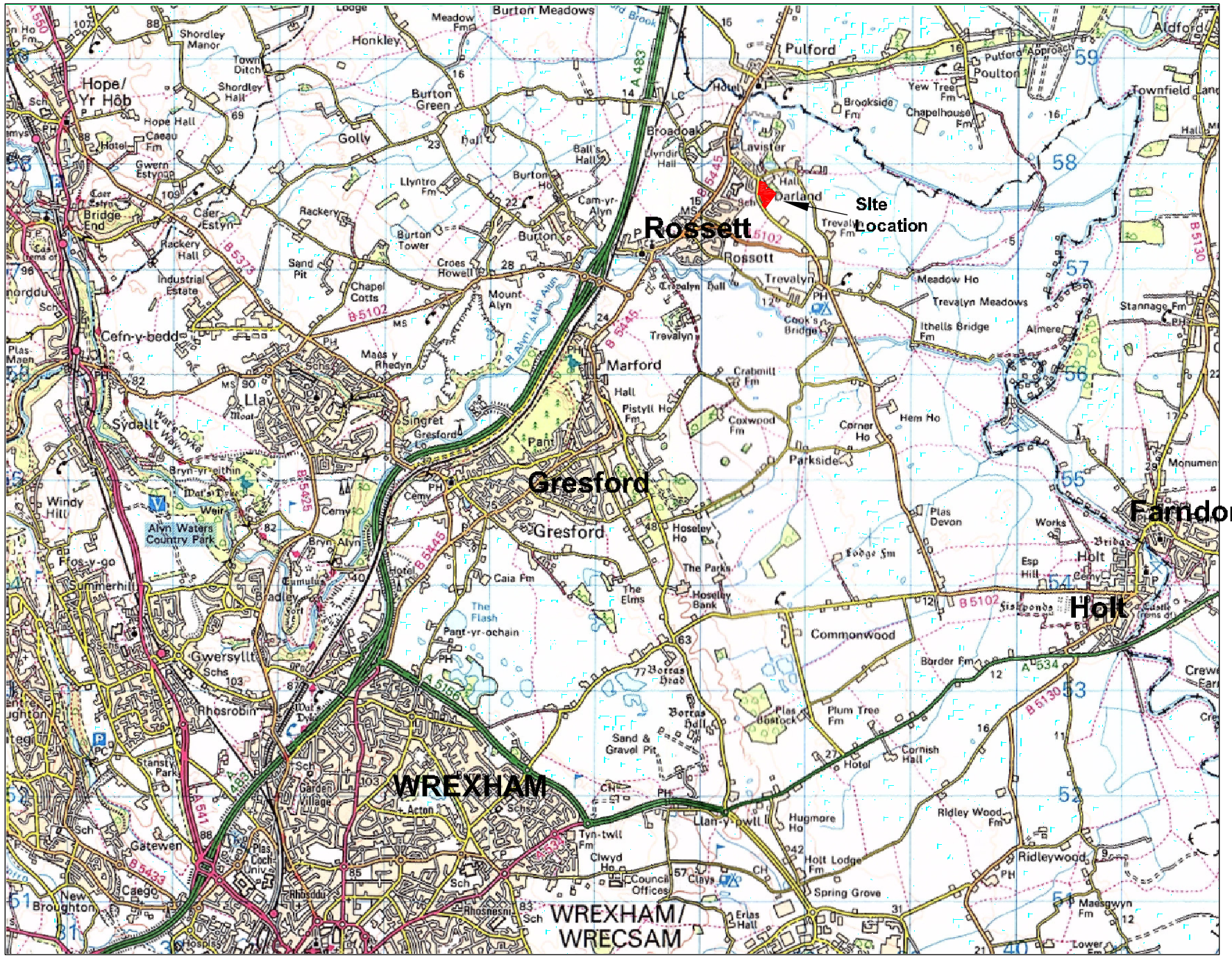
The proposed development will also have no major or moderate adverse residual effect on the wider landscape character of landscape within the SLA to the south and east.

Visual Effects

There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on the visual amenity of recreational receptors or residential receptors, within the SLA itself.

There will be no major or moderate adverse residual effects on recreational or residential receptors that lie outside the SLA.

Fig.01



Site Location
Scale 1:50,000

KEY

Proposal Site



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'Rivington', Church Lane, Farndon, Chester CH3 6QD

Client	**Land Planning**		
Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**Site Location**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: 50,000@ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 01**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

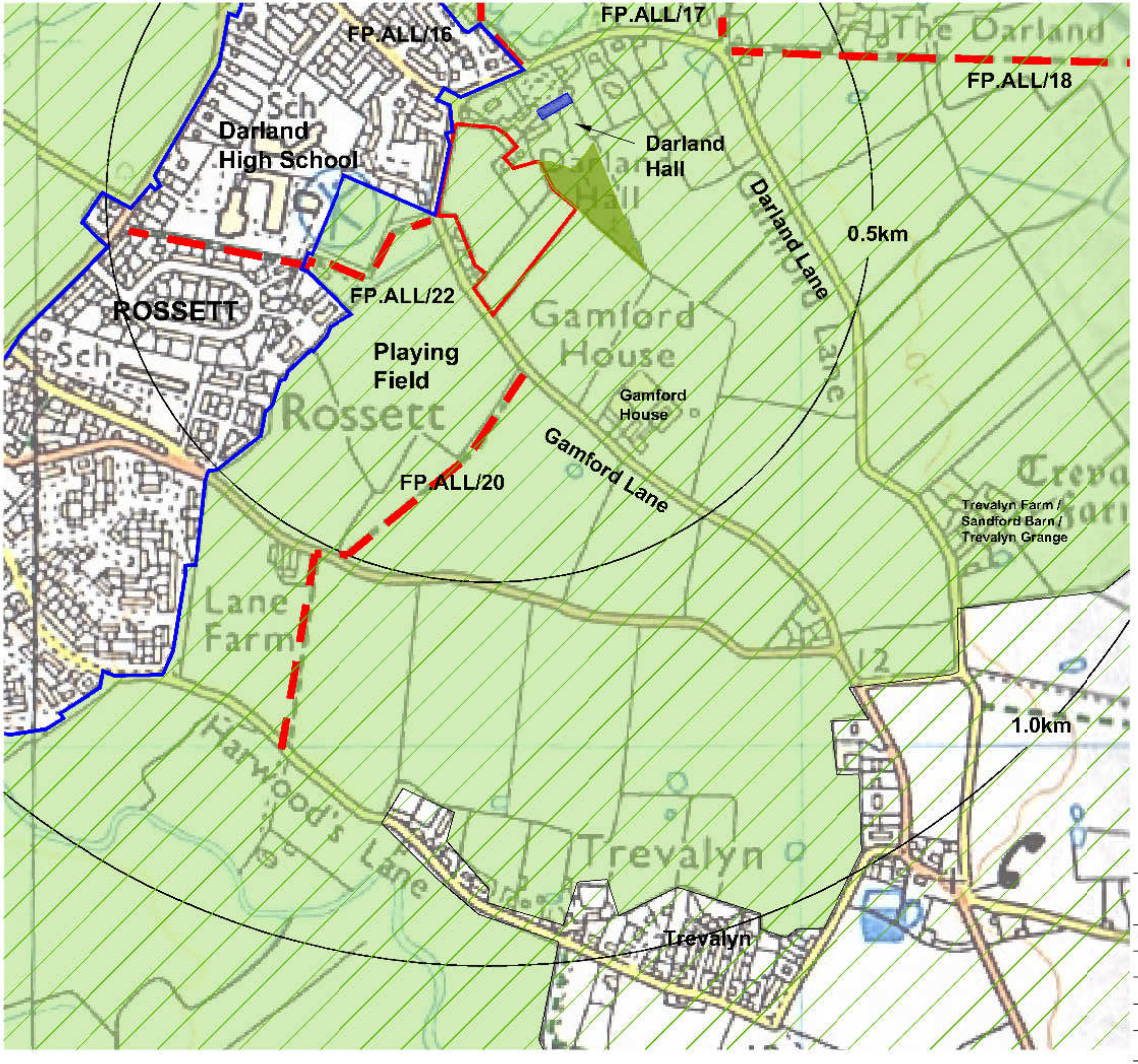


Fig.02

KEY

- Proposal Site
- Woodland
- Settlement Boundary
- Listed Buildings
- PROW Rights of Way
- Special Landscape Area (SLA)
- Green Barrier

North

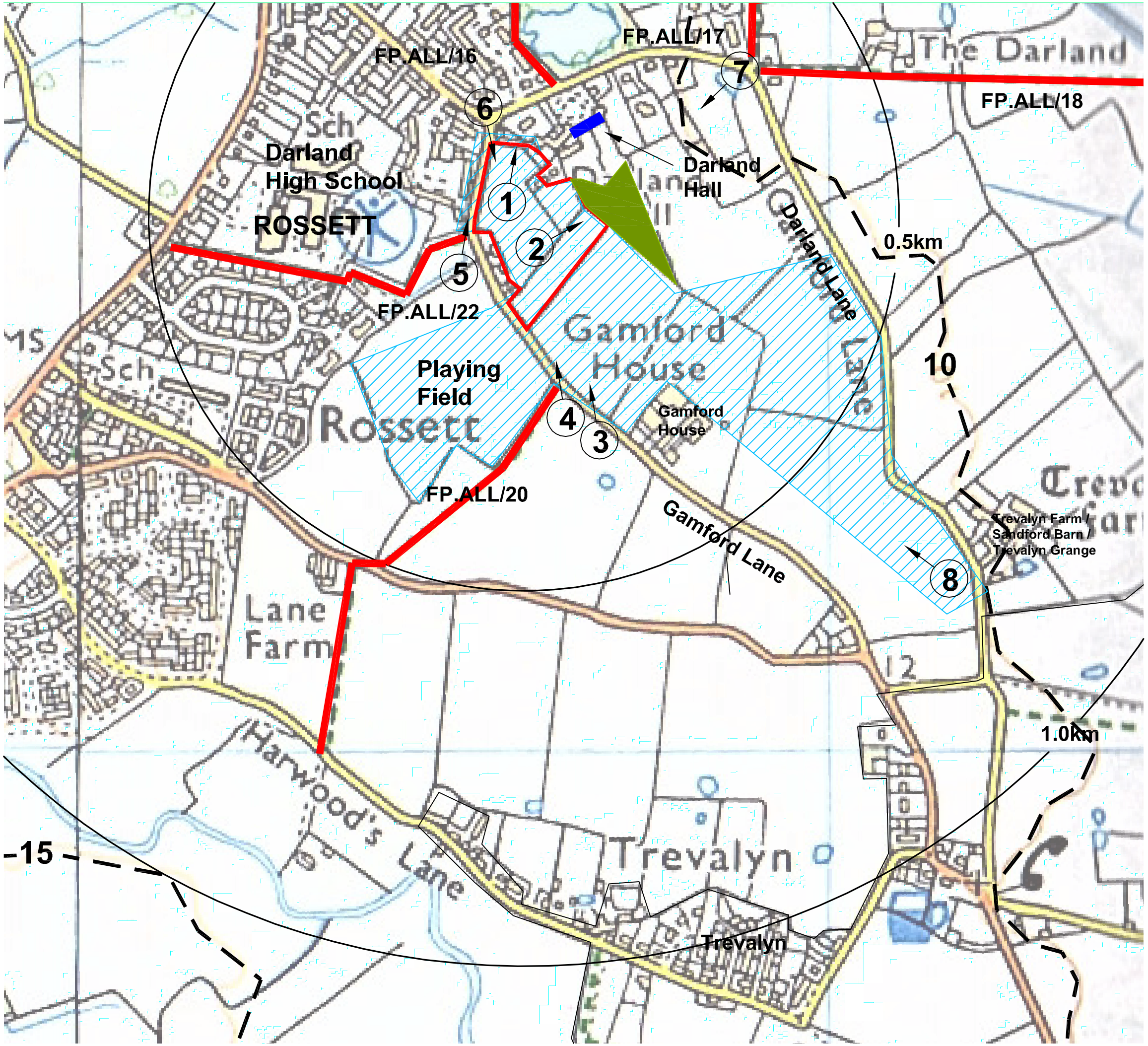
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Scale Bar

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Client	**Land Planning**		
Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**Landscape Planning Designations**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: 5000 @ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 02**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

Fig.03



KEY

- Proposal Site
- Photographic Viewpoints (2)
- Zone of Theoretical Visual Influence
- Landform / Contours (10)
- PROW Rights of Way (FP)
- Listed Buildings
- Woodland

North

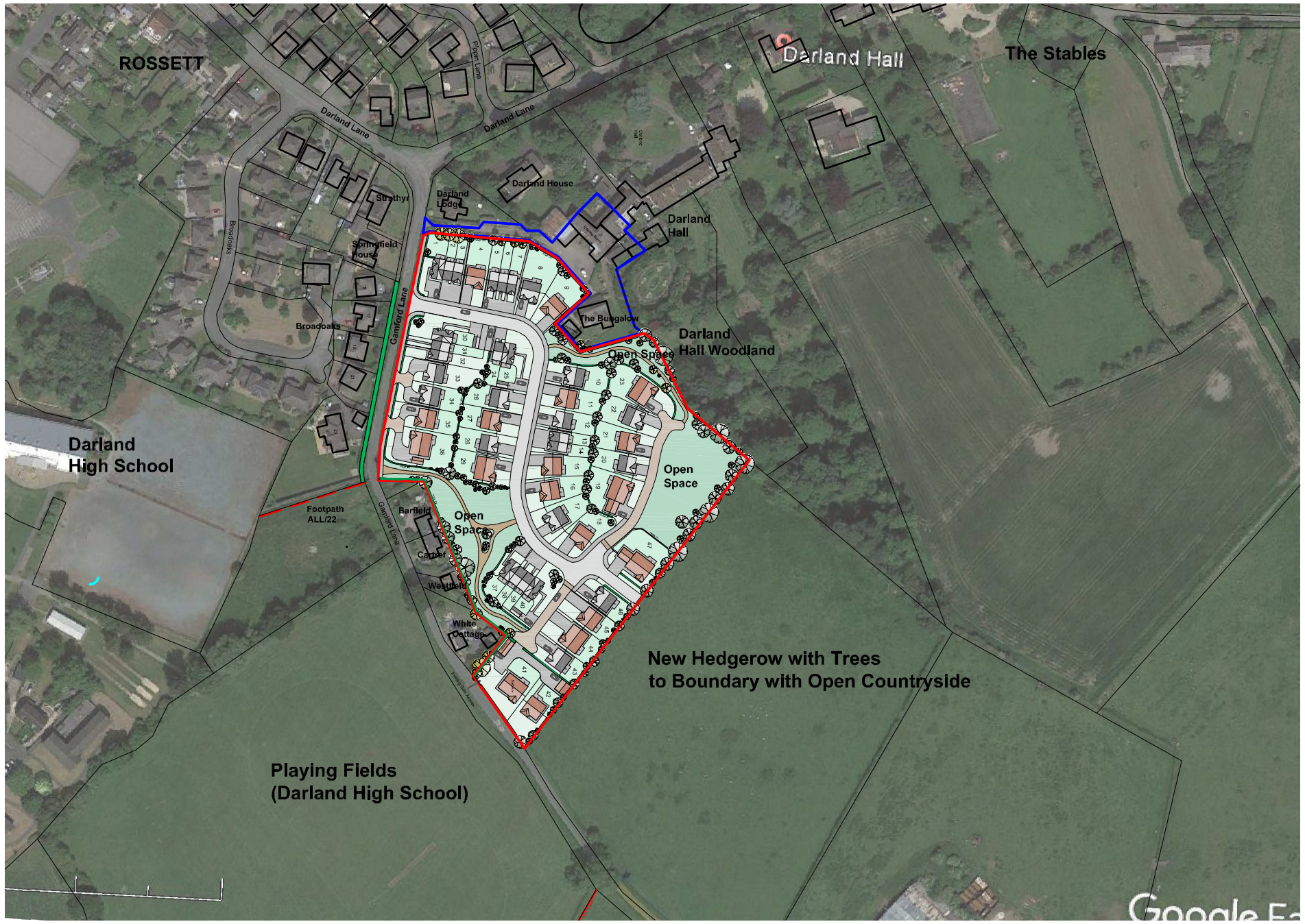
250m

Scale Bar

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Client	**Land Planning**		
Project	**Land at Mount View Farm, Malpas**		
Drg.Title	**L'scape Context & Zone of Theoretical Visual Influer**		
Date	**Nov 2013**	**Scale: 5,000 @ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 03**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

Fig.04



Proposed Site / Landscape Layout
Scale 1:2500

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Client	**Land Planning**		
Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**Proposed SIte Layout**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: 2500 @ A3**	**Drg Nr: Flg. 04**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

Fig.05

Boundary with trees / copse (grounds & garden of Darland Hall)

Existing hedgerow with small trees
(retained where possible)

Extent of proposed site indicated by post and rail fence



Viewpoint 1 From within site facing North East

Darland Lane (behind)

Existing access to site and lane to The Bungalow

Darland Lodge

Darland House

Barns and Bungalow

Hedgerow to
Gamford Lane

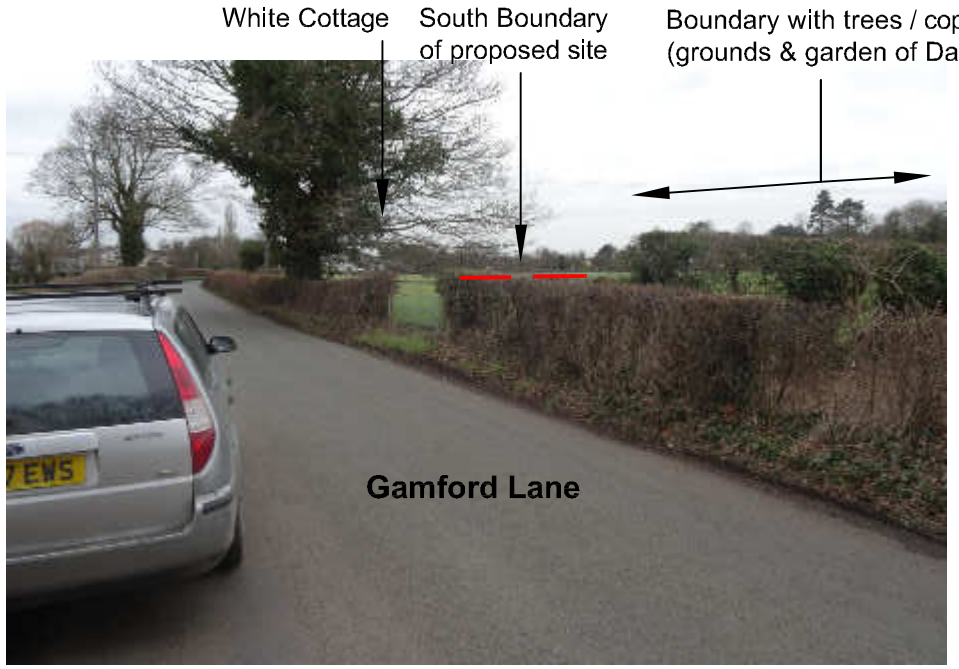


Viewpoint 2 From within site facing North

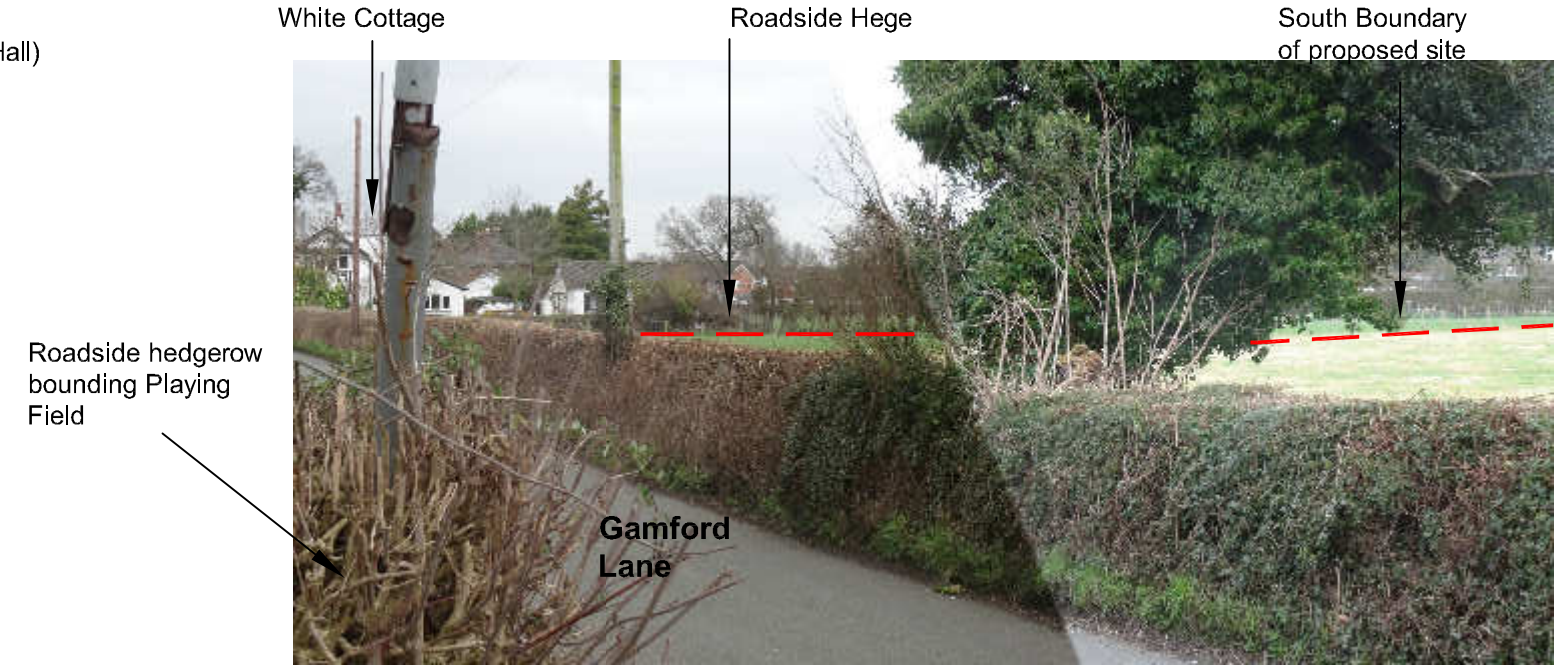
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Client	**Land Planning**		
Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**Viewpoints 1 & 2**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: NTS @ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 05**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

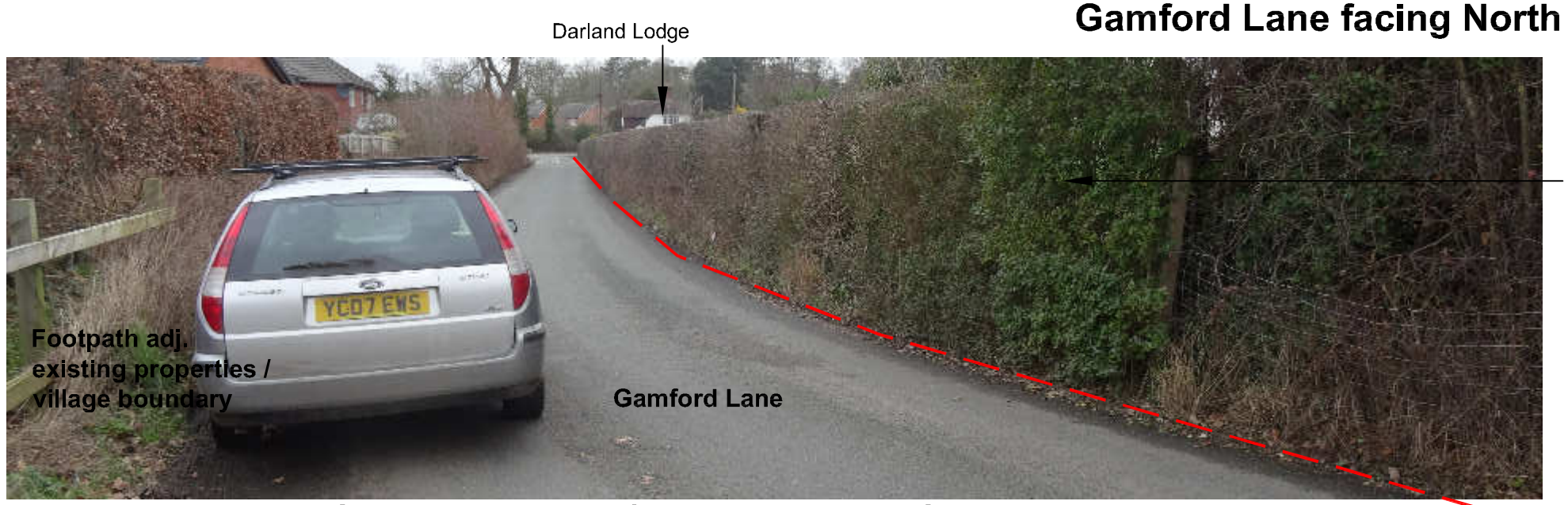
Fig.06



Viewpoint 3 From Gamford House



Viewpoint 4 From footpath FP ALL/ 20 adjacent Playing Field / Gamford Lane facing North West



Existing hedgerow adj. Gamford Lane to be removed and re-planted allowing 2.0m pavement.Footpath to continue into open space of proposal site

Viewpoint 5 From footpath FP ALL/22 opposite Barfield House



Viewpoint 6 From Gamford Land / Darland Lane Junction

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Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**Viewpoints 3 4 5 & 6**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: NTS @ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 06**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

Fig.07



Viewpoint 7 From Pond at 'The Stables' facing South West



Viewpoint 8 From Trevalyan Farm / Sandford Barn / Trevalyan Grange

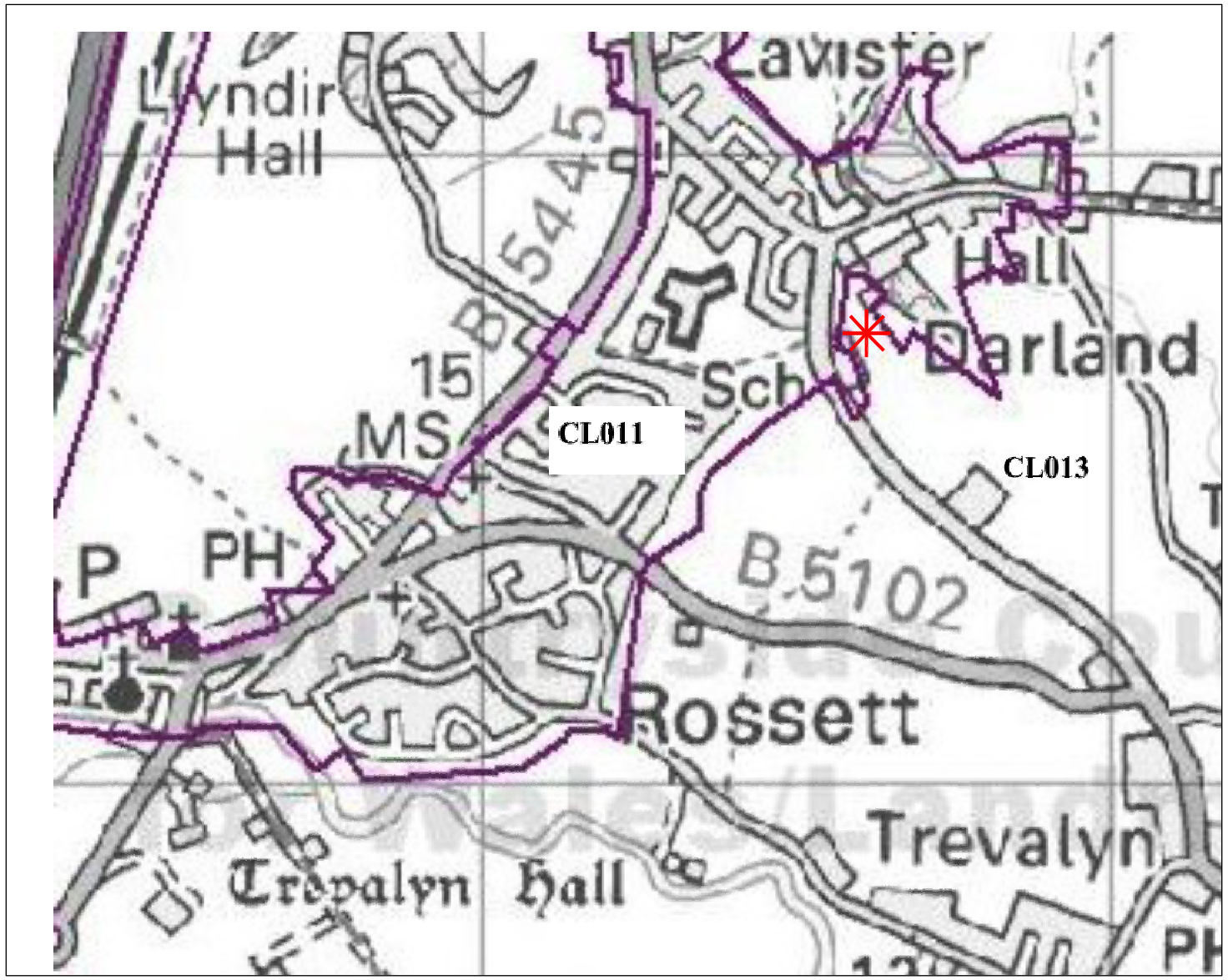
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Client	**Land Planning**		
Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**Viewpoints 7 & 8**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: NTS / A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 7**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

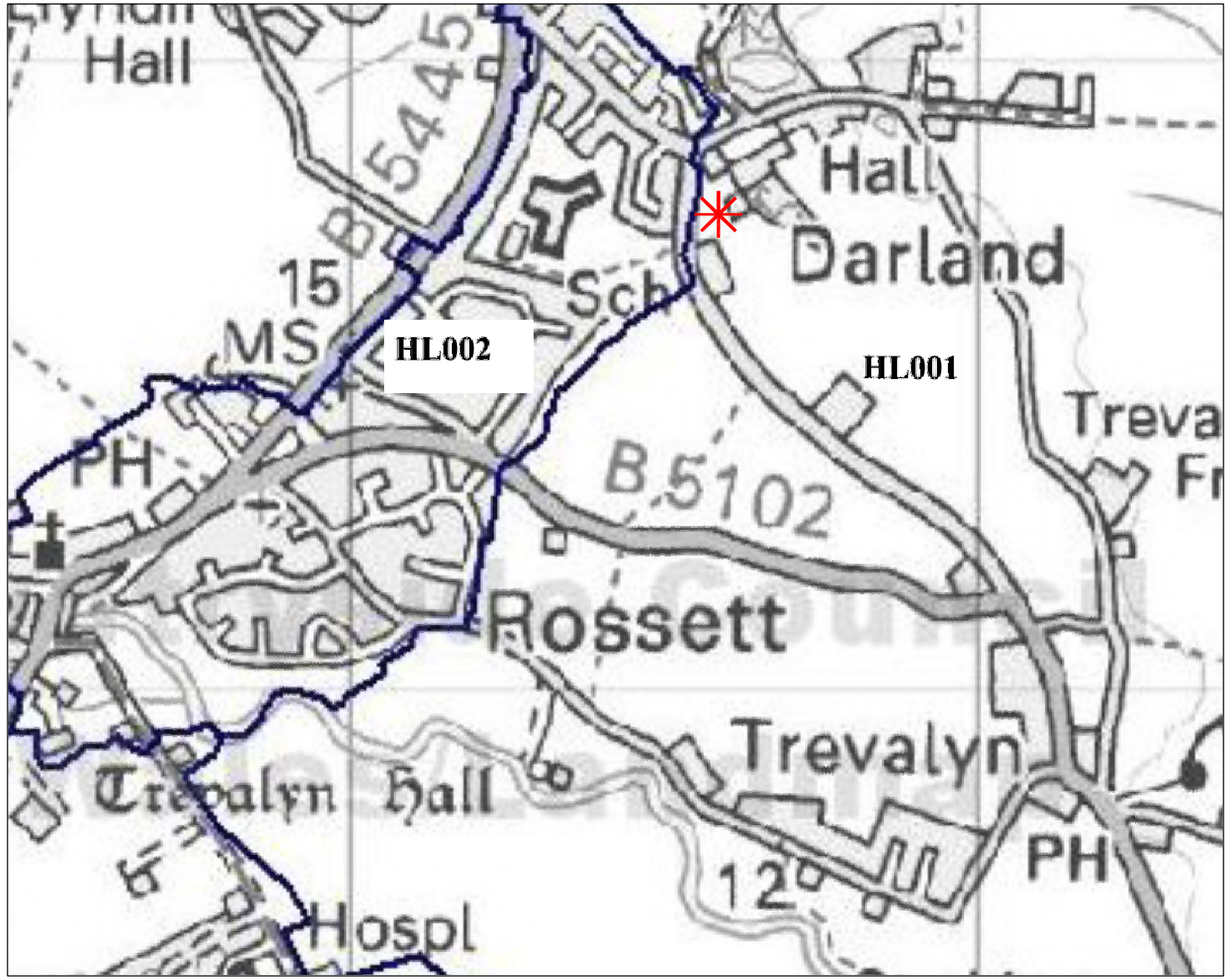
KEY

Proposal Site ✳

Fig.08



LANDMAP
Cultural Landscape
Scale 1:10,000



LANDMAP
Geological Landscape
Scale 1:10,000

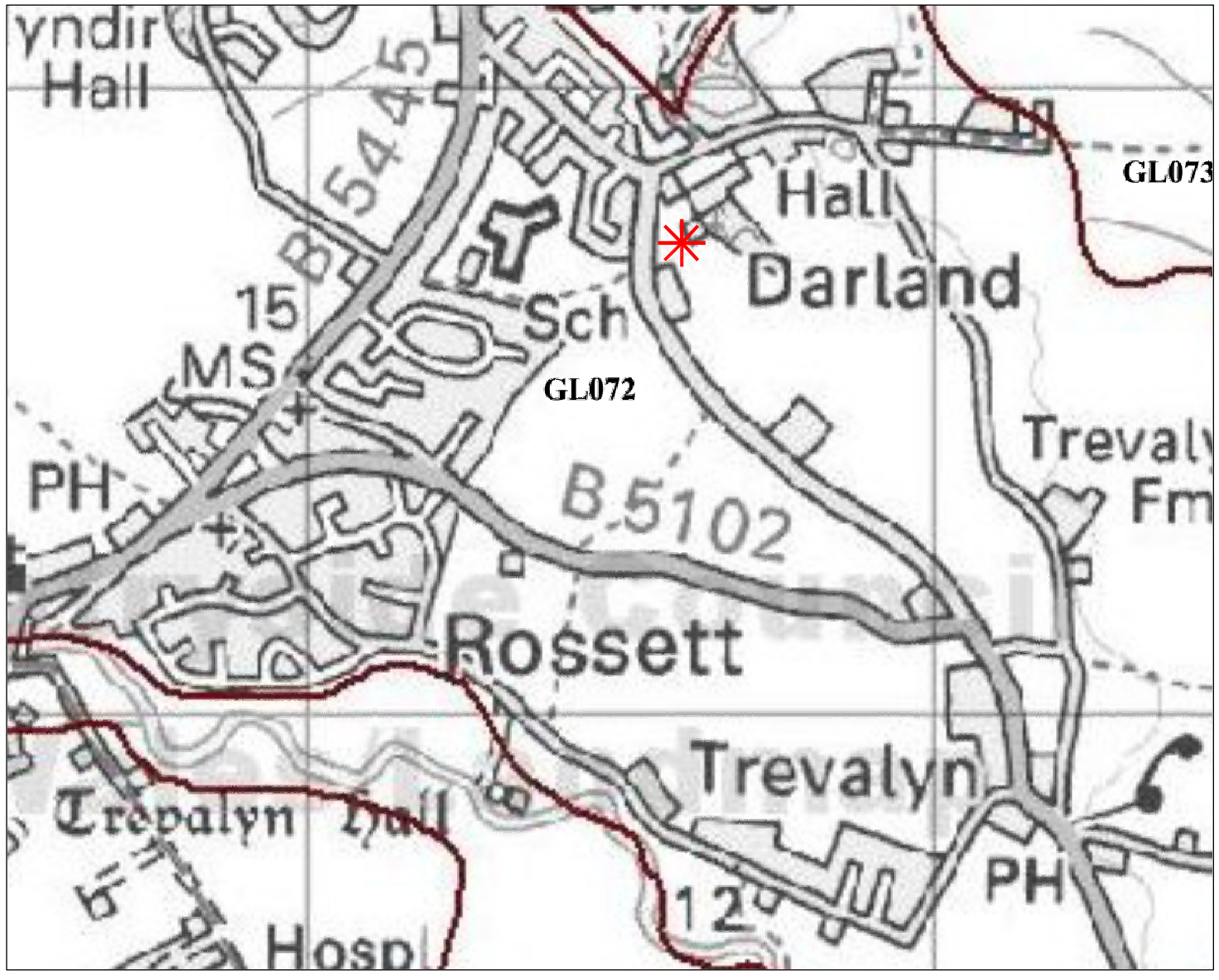
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Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**LANDMAP Cultural & Geological Landscape**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: 10,000 @ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 08**
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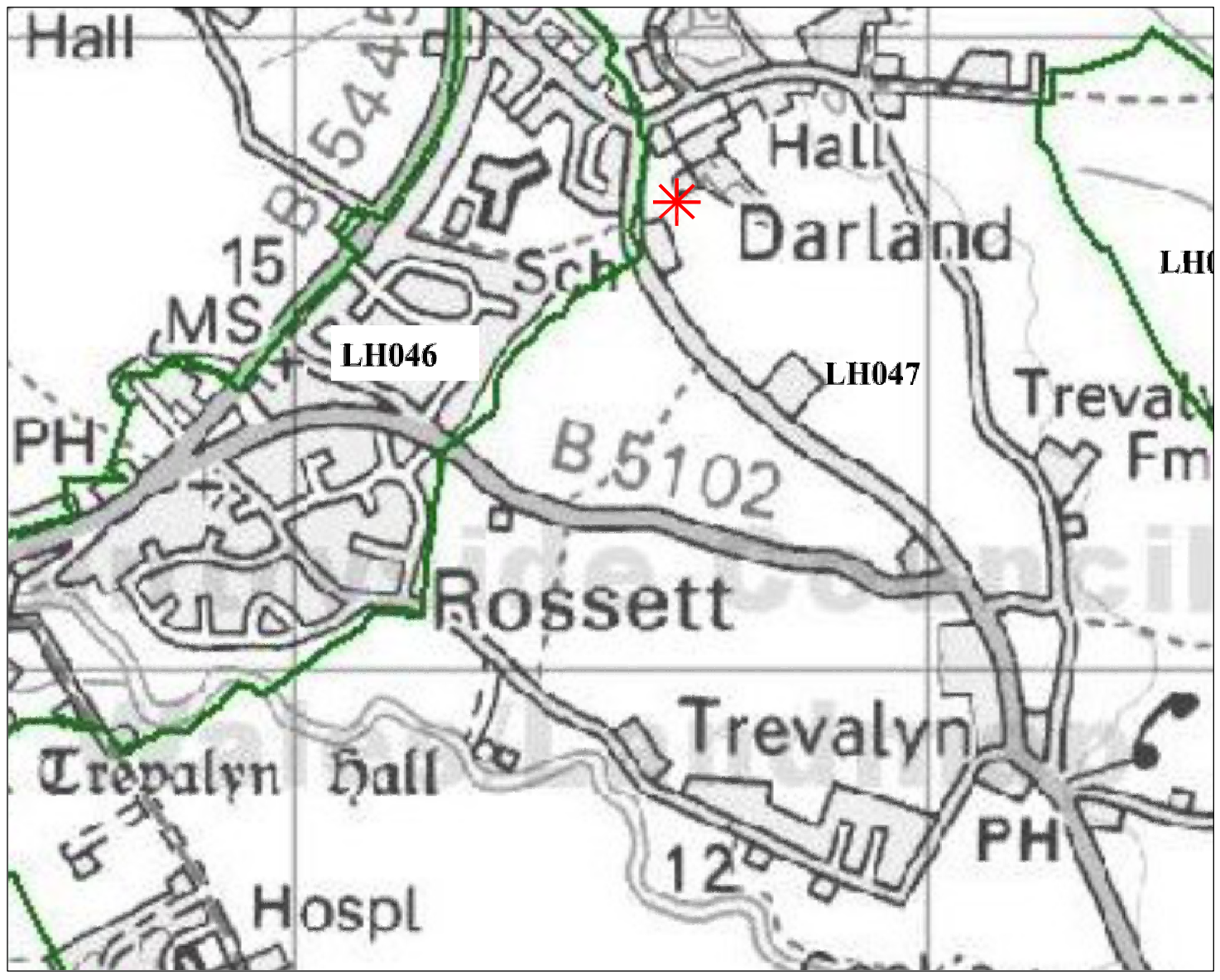
Fig.09

KEY

Proposal Site



LANDMAP
Historical Landscape
Scale 1:10,000



LANDMAP
Landscape Habitats
Scale 1:10,000

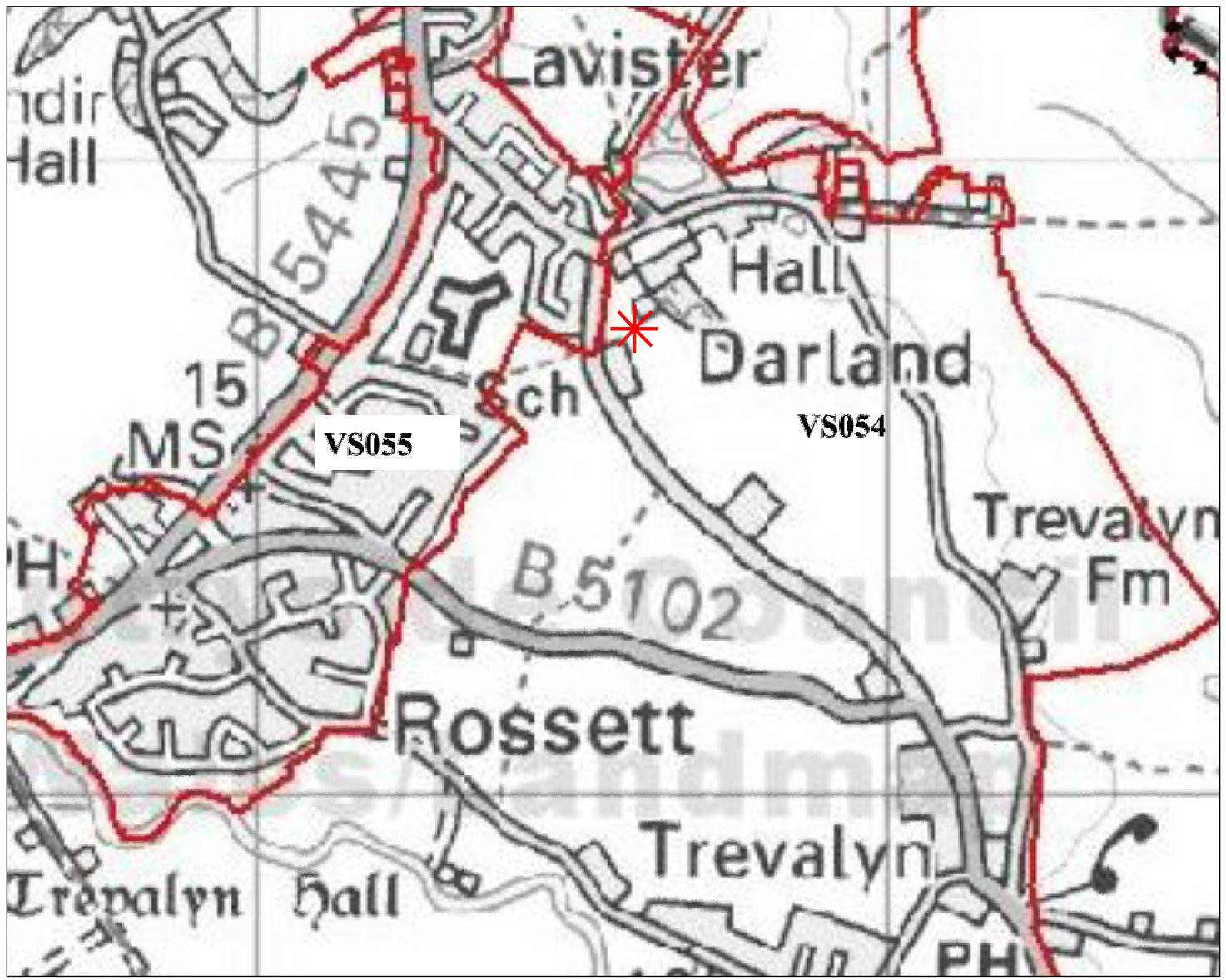
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Client	**Land Planning**		
Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**LANDMAP Historical Landscape & L'scape Habitats**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: 10,000@ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 09**
Drawn	**RKR**		**Issue: 01**

Fig.10

KEY

Proposal Site ✳



LANDMAP
Visual & Sensory
Scale 1:10,000

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Project	**Land at Gamford Lane, Rossett**		
Drg.Title	**LANDMAP - Visual & Sensory**		
Date	**Jan 2017**	**Scale: 10,000 @ A3**	**Drg Nr: Fig. 10**
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