

Site at Home Farm, Llay, nr Wrexham :

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL APPRAISAL

Prepared for

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1 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

- 1.1 BCA Landscape (BCAL) (Chartered Landscape Architects, Liverpool) were instructed by Michael Cunningham Architects (MCA) in September 2014 to evaluate an area of land at Home Farm, Llay, to the north and east of Gresford Road, Wrexham, and assess its suitability for the purposes of residential development.
- 1.2 The overall proposal is to be submitted to Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC) as a Planning Application : this Appraisal will be submitted as a supporting statement.
- 1.3 The appraisal is set out in accordance with procedures noted in the standard document *"Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment"* (Third Edition) (the Guidelines) published jointly by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013).
- 1.4 The site appraisal was carried out in September 2014, by a Chartered Landscape Architect. The appraisal should be read in conjunction with the plans and illustrations contained in Appendix A : all place names are spelled in accordance with the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale Sheet 256 Wrexham & Llangollen

2 DESCRIPTION OF SITE CONTEXT

Site Location

- 2.1 The Site is located to the north east of Wrexham, and east of the village of Llay, as shown in Plan 1. It is part of the land holding of Home Farm (noted 1 on Plan 02) approximate central grid reference is SJ 3370 5620.
- 2.2 Llay is a large village four miles (6.5km) north of Wrexham. It does have medieval origins, but between 1919 - 1926 it was expanded to serve the newly constructed Llay Main Colliery : the colliery proprietors (Hickleton Main Colliery Ltd) were enlightened developers, and employed Barry Parker (of Parker and Unwin, noted for their contribution to the Garden City movement) to design the settlement. The core of this is to the south and west of a tributary valley (2) of the River Alyn and thus remote from the potential development Site - this valley (Nant-y-Gaer Wood) divides the Llay settlement with the expansion (3) to the north and east (i.e. towards the Site) being modern residential development (1970 onwards) of typical suburban character with estate roads and detached / semi-detached housing.

Land Use Context

- 2.3 The surrounding land to the north and east is predominantly pasture, divided by hedgerows and occasional blocks of woodland. Land to the south is more wooded, towards the valley of the River Alyn. Land to the west is residential, being the edge of Llay as noted above.

Access

- 2.4 The B5373 Gresford – Ruthin Road provides the primary access to this area, crossing the steeply sided Alyn Valley then running north westwards passed the Site where it is known as Gresford Road (4). It forms a junction (signal controlled) with the B5102 route eastwards (5) to Rossett and Chester (Straight Mile) at the north west corner of the Site ; this is known as the Crown junction (6) on account of the public house on the corner. The B5102 continues westwards, with a link to Wrexham via Llay New Road (B5425) (7) on the west side of Llay,

Other routes springing from the Crown junction are Chapel Lane (8) a minor road heading into the countryside to the north east, with the continuation of the B5373 northwards towards Ruthin being known as Rackery Lane (9).

- 2.5 Gresford Road (4) and Straight Mile (5) are bus routes : there is no rail access, the nearest station being at Wrexham itself, on the Chester – Shrewsbury line.
- 2.6 Access on foot is via the pavements of the road network. On Gresford Road the pavement is continuous on the west side ; on the Straight Mile it is also continuous, on the north side. A public footpath (Right of Way No 5) (10) between Gegin Lane (11) and Chapel Lane (8) runs along the eastern boundary hedgerow ; there is no formal connection in to the Site.

Built Environment

- 2.7 To the north – there is a group of dwellings (12) on the B5375 Rackery Lane, opposite the Llay Industrial Estate entrance and approximately 400m from the junction. Chapel Lane (8) serves scattered dwellings (noted on the Plan) including (from the west / Crown junction) No's 2 ("The Courtyard") and No 4 ("Chain House"), 'The Poplars', Chapel Cottages and Chapel House Farm. East of this the Lane forms a junction with Higher Lane which runs eastwards towards Mount Pleasant, on the B5102 road.
- 2.8 There is no settlement to the east of the Site, until the small group of houses at Mount Pleasant (SJ 3480 5680) is reached approximately 0.5 miles (0.8km) from the boundary.
- 2.9 There are two large detached houses adjacent to the southern boundary, close to Gresford Road ; these are Y Bwthyn (13) and Maes y Rhedyn (14). To the east of these is a further detached house (Oak Tree Farm - 15) and Knowle Cottage (16), on the junction with Gegin Lane.
- 2.10 The area to the west of the Site, across Gresford Road, is developed with the modern housing (3) which extended the village of Llay eastwards (as noted 2.2 above) : this is served by regular estate road junctions (Fairoaks Crescent, Oakfield Park, Meadow Rise, and Forest Road). Home Farm(1) is situated to the east of Gresford Road, with the former outbuildings now converted to residential uses and known as Old Meadow Court (17).

Commercial Activity

- 2.11 Llay Industrial Estate (18) is immediately to the north and west of the Site
- 2.12 The residential area west of Gresford Road contains one commercial property (Black Brook Motors, vehicle sales and repairs - 19) located opposite Home Farm.

Landform

- 2.13 The Site is located in an area known in geological terms as the Wrexham Delta Terrace: it is part of a low plateau of varying height 88 – 74m AOD to the east of the town divided by the deep incision of the River Alyn approximately 0.6 miles (0.96km) to the south east. The Site is thus on the northern part, on land which is generally falling in a north-easterly direction towards the escarpment along the edge of the Cheshire Plain.
- 2.14 To the west, the land rises into a series of low ridges and valleys, including the River Alyn, which turns sharply northwards to define the west edge of the plateau. The hills are named,

and are prominent in views westwards from the Site context : they include Hope Hill (SJ 32950 56900) at a height of 330m AOD and Windy Hill (SJ 33080 54900) at approximately 160m AOD.

Landscape Structure

- 2.15 Plan 3 shows the main areas of woodland and hedgerow in the vicinity of the Site which helps to define the landscape structure. Nant-y-Gaer and Cockpit Wood are located in the valley sides to the south and west, but in the vicinity of the Site the following significant woodlands, trees and hedgerows help to define the visual envelope of the Site –

W1 – is the woodland copse established at The Crown junction : it provides partial screening for the larger scale buildings and activity of the Llay Industrial Estate to the north and west.

W2 – are the hedgerows and hedgerow trees at the west end of Chapel Lane, around the houses No's 2 – 4 and 'The Poplars', and include the line of individual oaks in the field between Chapel Lane and the Straight Mile (remnant of a former hedgerow). The group also extends north westwards along the Rackery Lane corridor.

W3 – continuous hedgerow between the Straight Mile and Chapel Lane immediately north and east of the Site, including a small copse of mature trees close to the road. W3 provides a screen to view towards the Site from the north east.

W4 – a belt of (predominantly) scots pine and oak established on the Site boundary along Gresford Road, between Home Farm and The Crown junction. The group includes a single wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), although not a good specimen it is worthy of note as the species is relatively uncommon.

W5 – a block of woodland around the houses Maes y Rhedyn and Y Bwthyn : the woodland screens potential views of the Site from the south east, especially to traffic approaching northwards along Gresford Road.

W6 – hedgerows in the fields east of the Site contain more trees than those within and immediately surrounding the Site. W6 is the more westerly of these ; it contains a high proportion of tree species (predominantly oak) and provides a screen to views of the Site from Gegin Lane and the houses at Mount Pleasant.

W7 – the hedgerow trees become denser between the southern boundary and Gegin Lane, providing effective screening

- 2.16 The pasture also features dividing hedgerows which are maintained as stock-proof boundaries. Whilst they contain tree species they are cut regularly to maintain height at 1.5 – 2.0m approximately. These are also marked on the plan 3.

Statutory Designations

- 2.17 There are four Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and one SSSI within 0.625 miles (1km) of the Site – these are detailed in section 5 of the Ecology Report (TEP 4358.01.001 June 2014). Of these, the Ballswood Quarry and Cockpit Wood LWS is 0.38 miles (0.6km) to the north east and the Chawel Singret SSSI 0.3 miles (0.5m) to the east have a degree of connectivity to the Site via the network of hedgerows including W2 and W6.

- 2.18 There are no trees protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) within the Site context

Other Features

- 2.19 There was a landfill site (20) at Bank Farm 0.25 miles (0.4km) north of the Site beyond Chapel Lane. This is now complete and restored as a low domed landform, with grassland and scrub woodland

Landscape Character

- 2.20 **The Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)** - is one of a series of guidance notes produced by WCBC, to support the policies of the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP). Adopted in March 2007 it is part of an all-Wales initiative developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the Welsh Landscape Partnership Group : the study covers aspects of earth science, biodiversity, visual and sensory, history & archaeology and culture, and evaluates them. This has allowed recognisable landscape character areas to be identified, and recommendations made to manage and enhance the landscape heritage in an appropriate way for the future
- 2.21 The Site is within Landscape Character Area 8 “*Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrás*” described overall as “*A valuable lowland plateau of well-drained agricultural land, sand and gravel extraction, and commuter villages with a mining history, which surrounds Wrexham to the north and east*”. The designation summarises the following key –
- *Generally undulating open arable farmland affected by proximity to urban areas*
 - *Large visible sand quarry at Ballswood to west of A483. Other quarries are extensive but less widely visible*
 - *Very distinctive kettle hole landscape to the east of Wrexham, including open farmland dimpled with hollows and attractive*
 - *landscapes with open water, mosses and woodland*
 - *Mixed industrial development and locally prominent coal tips at Llay and Gresford*
 - *Villages are semi-rural with extensive suburban development*
- 2.22 The Countryside Council for Wales–have produced a national landscape character, and the Site is within Area 13 “*Deeside and Wrexham*”. The assessment is on a broader scale, with the undulating landform arising from the glacial till and the incision of the River Alun noted as key characteristics.
- 2.23 The diversity of the wider area is described as a “*mosaic*”: it is noted as supporting a range of land uses including cattle and sheep grazed pasture interspersed with treed mixed native hedgerows and blocks of deciduous and mixed woodland, in addition to areas of arable cultivation. This description applies to the Site context.

3 LANDSCAPE PLANNING CONTEXT

- 3.1 The Site is located within the administrative area of Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC). This context includes policies at national as well as local level, and those which influence issues of landscape and visual quality are summarised as follows.

National Planning Policy

- 3.2 The Welsh Assembly Government states that the key role of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development, now and for future generations, between economic development to secure rising living standards and to protect and enhancement of the environment. The current edition (Edition 7 July 2014) of National Planning Policy Wales (PPW7) includes the following guidance on to promote good quality environmental design.

- 3.3 In Section 4, Planning for Sustainability

4.7.8 Development in the countryside should be located within and adjoining those settlements where it can be best be accommodated in terms of infrastructure, access and habitat and landscape conservation. Infilling or minor extensions to existing settlements may be acceptable, in particular where it meets a local need for affordable housing, but new building in the open countryside away from existing settlements or areas allocated for development in development plans must continue to be strictly controlled. All new development should respect the character of the surrounding area and should be of appropriate scale and design.

- 3.4 Section 5 Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast notes the following general criteria regarding trees and woodlands -

5.2.9 Trees, woodlands and hedgerows are of great importance, both as wildlife habitats and in terms of their contribution to landscape character and beauty. They also play a role in tackling climate change by trapping carbon and can provide a sustainable energy source. Local planning authorities should seek to protect trees, groups of trees and areas of woodland where they have natural heritage value or contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality. Ancient and semi-natural woodlands are irreplaceable habitats of high biodiversity value which should be protected from development that would result in significant damage.

5.2.10 Local planning authorities should, as appropriate, make full use of their powers to protect and plant trees to maintain and improve the appearance of the countryside and built up areas.

- 3.4 Section 9 deals specifically with the design of housing.

- 3.5 PPW7 also refers to a series of Technical Advice Notes (TAN) in which TAN 12 'Design' addresses design quality. Section 4 covers the delivery of good design, and summarises the following key attributes regarding 'character' of development -

- *Landscape design - the way in which the land will be treated (other than buildings) for the purpose of enhancing or protecting amenities of the site and the area in which it is situated ;*
- *Scale - of development in relation to surroundings, including height, width and length of each building proposed within the development; how the massing of the proposal*

contributes to the existing hierarchy of development to reinforce character; how the mass and height impacts on privacy, sunlight and microclimate; and how height impacts on the attractiveness and safety of neighbouring public space ;

- *Amount - the number of proposed residential units or the floor space for each proposed use forming part of the development: how the proposed density and mix will encourage different uses by various sectors of the community. Anticipate potential change in the make up and needs of occupiers and how the proposal anticipates, in the short and longer term, efficient use of land whilst safeguarding the quality of life. Where applicable, consider how the development provides innovative solutions to accommodate higher density whilst considering the outcome of higher density on its surroundings ;*
- *Layout of development - how the layout makes the development integrate with its surroundings whilst taking into consideration the orientation of the building to maximise energy efficiency and connectivity (the ways in which routes and open spaces within the development are provided, situated and orientated in relation to each other and to buildings and spaces outside the development); how the external area contributes towards the development and is used to make the development a more sustainable development; how is the chosen site the best location and how it links into adjacent uses ; and*
- *Appearance - (exterior design, including materials) means the aspects of a building or place within the development which determine the visual impression of the building or place makes, including external built form of the development, its architecture, materials, decoration, lighting, colour and texture.*

3.6 The issue of 'Appearance' is primarily for the detail design stage

Local Planning Policy

Wrexham County Borough Local Development Plan

3.7 The formal examination of the Wrexham Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) 2013 to 2028 began on 25th January 2012, but due to fundamental concerns raised by the Planning Inspector the hearing sessions were suspended, and LDP2 was therefore officially withdrawn on 16th March 2012. As a consequence, although it is now reached its end date the statutory Development Plan for the County is the **Unitary Development Plan (UDP)** (1996 – 2011) with the following policy statements relevant to "landscape" issues.

3.8 **Policy GDP1** states that all new development should:-

- a) *Ensure that built development in its scale, design and layout, and in its use of materials and landscaping, accords with the character of the site and makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the nearby locality.*

3.9 Section 5 deals with Environment & Conservation and establishes the principle of 'Green Barriers' for development control, with the prime aim of preventing the coalescence of urban areas and villages with other settlements.

Policy EC1 seeks to control the type of development allowed in Green Barriers to 'soft' uses such as agriculture, forestry, playing fields ; however the Home Farm site is not designated as

a Green Barrier area thus the policy does not apply (The nearest Green Barrier designation runs along Gegin Lane, with the protected land to the south, away from the Site).

- 3.10 **Policy EC4** seeks to protect and enhance the existing landscape features –

Development proposals should provide for the conservation and management of hedgerows, trees, orchards, woodland, wildlife and other natural landscape and water features, and include new planting in order to enhance the character of the landscape and townscape. Development which results in the loss or significant damage to valuable trees, important hedgerows or ancient woodland sites will not be permitted.

- 3.11 **Policy EC5** addresses development within 'Special Landscape Areas' (SLA) – the Home Farm site is not within an SLA, the boundary of the nearest such area being to the north of Higher Lane, to the north and east of the Site.

- 3.12 **Policy EC6** – controls development on or near to sites of biodiversity interest. The Ecologist's Report (TEP 4358.01.001 June 2014) notes (at 7.1) the hedgerows of the Site as wildlife habitat ; whilst retention within the site may be problematic the perimeter hedgerows should be retained to maintain continuity with those adjacent areas as a corridor strategy.

- 3.13 **Policy EC11** seeks to protect sites of potential archaeological interest : there are no Scheduled Monuments, and no records of such interest on the Home Farm site.

- 3.14 The provision of open spaces in new housing development is noted in **Policy CLF5** –

New development of ten dwellings or more must provide informal public open space within the site at a minimum level of 0.4 hectare per 50 dwellings, be conveniently located for users, and usable for playing field(s) and / or equipped children's play area(s) and open amenity area(s).

In exceptional circumstances, the application of these standards may be varied, in the case of small urban infill housing development, where the developer enters into a legal agreement for financial contributions towards the cost of public open space provision where:-

a) the site is unsuitable for public open space provision; or

b) the development would not place significant additional pressure on public open space facilities in the vicinity of the site

The number of dwellings proposed is 365, thus an area of 2.92ha is suggested for informal open space.

- 3.15 **Policy CLF6** requires the protection and retention of any public rights of way. There are none within the Site ; however, a public footpath runs just outside the east boundary – the landscape strategy proposes links from the Site to this right of way, and also proposes links westwards to Gresford Road.

- 3.16 Chapter 11 of the UDP deals with minerals, and at 11.10 notes that sand and gravel extraction is the principal mineral working activity in the County Borough with output contributing significantly to the total regional output of North Wales. The **Policy MW9** addresses the protection of such resources -

Resources of sand and gravel, and clay will be safeguarded from non-mineral development in order to prevent the sterilisation of unworked minerals deposits. The identification of mineral resource areas gives no presumption in favour of the working of any deposits. Within such areas non-mineral development will be strongly resisted

unless a resource assessment (or other information) is provided to demonstrate that no exploitable reserves exist within the development site. Where non-mineral development which materially prejudices minerals resources is granted planning permission on land holding minerals deposits, provision should be made for the prior removal of mineral deposits.

Preliminary discussions between the Project Architect and the WCBC Minerals Officer has determined that the buffer zone will not be applied

- 3.17 **Policy MW11** identifies buffer zones around known mineral resources ; that protecting the Llay Ballswood minerals deposits runs along Gegin Lane close to the workings, and is 500m eastwards of the Site at its nearest point.

Local Planning Guidance Notes

- 3.18 WCBC has approved a series of Local Planning Guidance Notes (LPGN), which amplify the Development Plan policies with the objective of improving design standards : the notes are a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications.

Local Planning Guidance Note No 7 – Landscape and Development

- 3.19 The LPGN emphasises the importance of landscape design as an integral part of a development. It notes the importance of the landscape context, and sets out factors which are to be considered in both outline and detailed applications. At the outline stage the information required is -

- *existing boundaries*
- *position of existing trees and whether they are to be retained or removed*
- *the intended uses and treatment of the external spaces*
- *the location of screening factors e.g. buildings, trees etc within or outside the site*
- *the location of other structures*
- *any intended changes in landform*
- *the position and general type of planting*

These issues are described relative to the Home Farm site in section 5 below.

Local Planning Guidance Note No 10 – Public Open Space in New Housing Development

- 3.20 The LPGN notes the standards for the provision of open space proposed by the National Playing Fields Association (NPFA) for developments, expressed as area per 1,000 population, that is similar to the proposed Home Farm development of 365 dwellings -
- *1.62ha (4 acres) of playing fields*
 - *0.61ha (1.5 acres) of informal public open space (informal play space and landscaped amenity areas)*
 - *0.2ha (0.5acres) of children's equipped playground facilities*

Local Planning Guidance Note No 17 – Trees and Development

- 3.21 The LPGN sets out parameters for the protection of existing trees on development sites, summarised in 3.1 as –

- A) *Development which would result in damage and/or inappropriate felling of significant trees (i.e. BS 5837 Category A & B trees) and hedgerows will not normally be permitted. Planning conditions and Tree Preservation Orders will be used to safeguard trees in appropriate cases.*
 - B) *Development proposed near to existing trees, woodlands or hedgerows must be in accordance with the design and protection principles set out in this Local Planning Guidance Note and British Standard 5837: 2012 "Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction" (or any subsequent revisions).*
- 3.22 The current application is outline only, but in accordance with the criteria requested for large scale development in 3.1.C this Report contains a survey of trees (based on a topographical survey), a summary statement, and Tree Protection details (see drawing 14.543/100 and Appendix Two). The Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement required by BS8837:2012 should be submitted at the detailed application stage as it relates to the proposed housing layout and construction programme.
- 3.23 WCBC have also produced "*The Tree and Woodland Strategy*" (2005) which covers similar ground and refers to both LPGN 17 and Policy EC 4, 'Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland' (http://www.wrexham.gov.uk/assets/pdfs/planning/tree_strategy.pdf)

Local Planning Guidance Note No 30 – Design

- 3.24 The LGNP provides general guidance on the design of new residential areas : section A includes reference for the need of the site appraisal to cover the physical issues covered by this Report. Step III in section iv) notes specific details for landscape proposals.

Summary

- 3.25 The Site is located outside the Llay settlement. It does not fall within any of the WCBC designated landscapes (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Landscape Areas), nor is it within a Conservation Area.
- 3.26 The Site is categorised within the Landscape Character Area 8 which provides a summary description of the context : it is not covered by any landscape designation that would prohibit its development.

4 APPLICATION SITE - BASELINE APPRAISAL

4.1 The following review notes the condition of the Site September 2014. The review also assesses the sensitivity of the various landscape elements to change : the terminology used is in compliance with the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment guidelines contained in Appendix One.

4.2 The Site area is 15.6ha (38.8 acres) in total. The postcode of Home Farm is LL12 0NW

Access

4.3 The Site is maintained as farmland and there is no public access into the Site. Access points for the farmer's use are primarily –

- Field gates at two locations into the northern part of the Site, off the Straight Mile
- The main access through Old Meadow Court and into the hardstanding / yard of the farm, thence into the surrounding pasture
- A field gate off Gresford Lane, opposite Meadow Rise

Land Use

4.4 The Site is currently pasture, used for grazing livestock (beef cattle at the time of survey) as part of the residual activity of Home Farm : the grass is also cut for silage. There is one building within the Site area, this being the barn / storage building on the north side of the hardstanding, used for storage and livestock. The local context comprises similar areas of pasture and the land use is considered to be of **low sensitivity** to change.

Boundaries

4.5 The B5102 forms the northern boundary of the Site (approximately 0.34 miles / 0.55km long), and is here known as the Straight Mile, being slightly undulating but dead straight in its alignment. At the western end the boundary includes 'Cheshire Fencing' with the hedgerow being quite sparse in places. The land across the road to the north is pasture, with dominant hedgerows and narrow lanes (Chapel Lane, Higher Lane) which serve scattered dwellings and farms.

4.6 The east boundary is a hedgerow, maintained as a field boundary with no hedgerow trees. : there is a gated access point allowing farm traffic to pass to the open fields which continue to the east. A public footpath runs along the east side of the hedge (outside the Site) - this links from Chapel Lane to the Straight Mile, thence to the junction of Gegin Lane with Gresford Road 200m south of the Site

4.7 The southern boundary is also hedgerow, here forming a boundary between the Home Farm fields and the private curtilage land surrounding the houses Y Bwthyn and Maes y Rhedyn : these include mature woodland, with a short section of white rendered wall providing a distinct focal point in views across the fields from the north.

4.8 Gresford Road forms the south/west boundary (approximately 0.37 miles / 0.6km long), with a single access point serving Home Farm and its converted outbuildings known as Old Meadow Court on the north/east side. The west side of Gresford Road is bordered by the recent residential development noted in 2.2 above. The boundary with the converted farm buildings (now residential) of Old Meadow Court includes timber post and rail, and post and mesh with occasional lengths of hedgerow. The boundary is thus permeable in visual terms

- 4.9 The Site comes to an apex of land adjacent to the Crown junction. On the west side the former Llay Colliery site is now developed as Llay Industrial Estate.
- 4.10 The edge of the Site is thus almost entirely hedgerow on all sides, being of predominantly hawthorn with other occasional species such as elder, sycamore, holly, ivy, and blackthorn. The boundary between Home Farm and the Crown junction includes the belt of trees (W4) and thus has a distinctive character. The exceptions to the hedgerow lengths are noted as follows –
- The south/west boundary to Gresford Road is formed in a low limestone rubble wall for approximately 60m northwards of the boundary with Maes y Rhedyn.
 - There is a short length of white rendered wall forming the boundary with the Maes y Rhedyn, over 2m high and thus providing a visual block.
- 4.11 The boundaries are a significant part of the local landscape character and are thus considered to be of **high sensitivity** to change.

Landform

- 4.12 The landform is gently undulating with a general fall eastwards from approximately 88m AOD at the Crown junction to approximately 84.5m AOD in the north east corner. Levels in the south west corner (adjacent to Gresford Road) are in the region of 81.5m AOD.
- 4.13 There is a prominent depression in the south west part of the Site, at approximately 79.5m AOD. As noted 4.7 below this floods occasionally as an ephemeral pond. The landform is capable of accommodating housing development and is thus considered to be of **low sensitivity** to change.

Landscape Structure

- 4.14 The Site is divided into five individual fields of varying size by hedgerows : these contain potential tree species (such as sycamore) but are maintained as stock-proof barriers to a height of approximately 2m by regular cutting. They are features which are common and widespread throughout the local landscape, and are replaceable : they are considered to be of **medium sensitivity** to change.
- 4.15 Tree species are mainly to the west boundary along Gresford Lane, these being the dominant linear belt of (mainly) mixed scots pine and oak noted as W4 (described 2.14 above), two oaks opposite Oakfield Park (T25 – 26), and a single ash tree (T27) further south close to the junction with Forest Road. The trees are generally in good condition (tree survey contained as Appendix Two).
- 4.16 The hardstanding of the farm is enclosed with closely planted firs (*Abies* spp) on the south west edge, to screen the area from Gresford Road.

Drainage

- 4.17 There are no permanent water bodies on Site. The prominent hollow in the landform in the south east was dry at the time of the landscape appraisal ; however, the Ecology Report (TEP 4358.01.001 June 2014, at 5.16) notes it contained approximately 0.4m depth of water at the time of their survey (13th May 2014), thus supporting the view that the feature is ephemeral.

- 4.18 A former ditch line is evident running parallel with Gresford Road from the Crown junction in the north west towards the garden boundary of Home Farm. This is now filled in to form a shallow localised depression ; however, a length of approximately 40m remains open at the south end, noted in the Ecology Report (TEP 4358.01.001 June 2014) at 5.17 as botanically distinct. The features are considered to be of **low sensitivity** to change.

Visible Services

- 4.19 There are no overhead services within the Site. There is a telephone mast clearly visible in the south/east corner, just outside the boundary.

Statutory Designations

- 4.20 Other than the Planning Policies of the WCBC UDP (section 3 above) there are none specifically applicable to the Site

Cultural Heritage

- 4.21 The Site is in agricultural production as pasture, and there is no cultural heritage to record.

Landscape Character

- 4.22 The Wrexham LANDMAP Supplementary Planning Guidance is one of a series of guidance notes which support the policies of the adopted Unitary Development Plan (UDP). As noted 2.28 above, the Home Farm Site falls within Area 8 “*Gwersyllt, Llay, Gresford, Borrás*” and the following commentary summarises how the designation relates to the character of the development Site –

- *Generally undulating open arable farmland affected by proximity to urban areas* – this description applies to the Site, being gently undulating as noted in 4.4 above
- *Large visible sand quarry at Ballswood to west of A483. Other quarries are extensive but less widely visible* – not applicable ; the entrance to Ballswood (off Cegin Lane) is 0.5 miles (0.8km) north east of the Site but is not visible, being screened by the intervening hedgerows and landform.
- *Very distinctive kettle hole landscape to the east of Wrexham, including open farmland dimpled with hollows and attractive* – not applicable ; this landform is found south of Gresford, on the separate area of the designation to the south of the Alyn valley.
- *landscapes with open water, mosses and woodland* – partially applicable : there are no areas of open water or mossland, but the Site is surrounded by areas of woodland as noted in section 2.19 above.
- *Mixed industrial development and locally prominent coal tips at Llay and Gresford* – coal tips are not visible from the Site ; the Llay Industrial estate is also screened from view by the woodland W1 at the Crown junction.
- *Villages are semi-rural with extensive suburban development*- this description applies to the Site : the original core of Llay village has been extended to the west edge of Gresford Road through modern development of estate roads and semi-detached / detached housing. The former farm outbuildings have been converted into residential accommodation.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and Visual Receptors

4.23 The ZTV is defined in map form, and is the area of land within which a development would be theoretically visible. The area is assessed by taking into account areas which can be seen from the Site, then cross-checked by field work in visiting the periphery and looking back towards the Site to take into account the screening effect of features such as buildings, hedgerows, trees and woodlands. At this stage the ZTV is based on the visibility of the Site itself i.e. with no allowance for development : an assessment is then made on the ZTV of the developed Site with the difference in area helping to identify requirements for mitigation and identifying the scale of the landscape and visual impact.

4.24 Within the ZTV views of the Site will be experienced by 'visual receptors', noted as individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by any proposal. Visual receptors are noted at this stage to help identify any requirements for landscape interventions to mitigate visual effects.

4.25 The ZTV of the Site (pre development) is identified on the Plan 04. The area is drawn close to the Site boundary on account of the following features –

- To the north – the ZTV is limited by the hedgerows and hedgerow trees of Chapel Lane, and the woodland block W3.

From this area, visual receptors are identified as those living in the houses at the west end of Chapel Lane, particularly in views from the first floors ; traffic passing on the Straight Mile and on Chapel Lane ; users of the public footpath between Chapel Lane and the Straight Mile. The potential

- To the east – the ZTV spreads across the adjacent fields as far as the hedgerow / hedgerow tree character noted as W6 : west of this point views of the Site are heavily filtered by this feature.

Visual receptors are identified as those using the public footpath from the Straight Mile to Gegin Lane. It is also theoretically possible to see the Site from Gegin Lane (heading west), although the roadside hedgerows add to the screening effect and any view would occur in localised gaps.

- To the south – the ZTV is defined by the woodland (W5) surrounding the two dwellings Maes y Rhedyn and Y Bwthyn :

Residents of these two dwellings are also the principal visual receptors. Users of the public footpath from Gegin Lane towards the Straight Mile will also have views of the Site, partially screened by the intervening hedgerows.

- To the west – the ZTV is defined by the built development along the west side of Gresford Road. The strength of woodland W5, and the vertical alignment of the road (the approach is at a lower level than the Site) means that the visibility from the Gresford Road corridor is relatively limited when approaching northwards. The woodland W4 and the mature hedgerow at the north end will partially screen the Site, as will Home Farm and Old Meadow Court.

Visual receptors are those living in houses on the west side of the road ; at the north end views are reasonably filtered and/or screened by the woodland W4 and by Home Farm

and Old Meadow Court. Between Old Meadow Court and Meadow Rise the boundary hedgerow is mature, and will assist with screening views : south of this point

- 4.26 Approaching from Wrexham the ZTV is limited to the immediate surroundings of the Crown junction by the woodland W1, the Crown public house, and the landform of the approach along the B5102 Llay Road from the west which rises towards the Site boundary.

View Analysis

- 4.27 The Site is thus relatively enclosed with a restricted ZTV as noted. Views from the Site are similarly restricted outwards towards the limit of the ZTV shown on the plan. The higher ground to the west of Wrexham is prominent in longer views, particularly Hope Mountain 3.5 miles (5.6km) distant : the tower of Gresford Church is also prominent in views southwards from the east boundary footpath.

Landscape and Visual Setting

- 4.28 The following paragraphs consider the visual setting of the Site with reference to representative views illustrated in Fig 05 to 08.
- 4.29 **View 1** – is taken from within the pasture north of Home Farm, adjacent to Gresford Road and looking towards the Crown junction (the Crown pub itself is hidden behind the linear woodland W4). The view shows the generally level nature of the land at this point, making the vertical elements of hedgerows and tree groups (W1 and W4), as well as hedgerow trees north of the Site all the more effective in limiting the extent of visibility, there being no elevated viewpoints in the vicinity. The boundary of the final length of Straight Mile to the junction is open to the road due to the use of the Cheshire fencing rather hedgerow to define the boundary ; the housing along Gresford Road is effectively screened by the pine/oak belt W4. The panorama notes the locations of adjacent dwellings north of Straight Mile.
- 4.30 **View 2** – looks towards the southern boundary from the gateway in the intermediate hedgerow providing access to the southern pasture. The white rendered houses are a focal point framed by the surrounding woodland : Gresford Road and the bungalows along its western edge are also visible as this length is bordered by the low stone wall in place of the hedgerow. The view highlights the woodland pattern, the hollow in the landform (as 4.11 above), and the telephone mast outside the Site boundary.
- 4.31 **View 3** – is taken from a similar point, looking eastwards across the central area and showing the relationship of the existing Home Farm hardstanding /yard to the pasture. The view illustrates the gently undulating landform, and the pattern of hedgerow trees / woodland copse seen to the north and east of the Site (W3).
- 4.32 **View 4** – is taken from the pavement on the north side of Straight Mile, at the point where the public footpath crosses at the north/ east corner of the Site. View 4A looking west and View 4B looking east. The straight character of the road is evident, along with the undulating vertical alignment which reflects the general landform. Looking west (4A) the pine/oak planting (W4) along Gresford Road is prominent, and the profile of Hope Mountain is visible in the background.

5 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

- 5.1 WCBC has designated a number of wildlife and features within the local authority boundary, including Green Barrier (Policy EC1) and Special Landscape Areas (Policy EC5). The site and local landscape context with the ZVTI are not covered by either of these designations.
- 5.2 The Site is not part of a Conservation Area and does not contain any Listed Buildings ; it is farmland in private agricultural use and does not provide for any form of public access.
- 5.3 The Ecology Report has confirmed that the range of habitats across the Site are of low diversity and of little ecological value, with the most significant features for wildlife being the species-poor hedgerows which run across the Site, and the mature trees in the north/west corner.
- 5.4 The layout noted on the application plans is schematic, based on the illustrative masterplan produced by MCA. The key elements of the proposal are -
- A residential development of 365 dwellings : the masterplan also includes a possible location for a small 'corner shop'
 - Development set back from the site edges to allow retention of hedgerow boundaries and trees, and their protection in accordance with the BS5837:2012.
 - Internal circulation structure with hierarchy of roads including shared surface and a bus-only link preventing general through traffic between Gresford Road and the Straight Mile.
 - Provision of public open space, including the potential for sustainable drainage measures.
 - Public open space area shown is 3ha.
 - Provision of community facilities such as play provision and footpath links to improve connections to the public footpath network
- 5.5 The landscape strategy is illustrated by Plan 09 and responds to this layout.

Existing Landscape Features

- 5.2 The Site is currently pasture, divided by internal hedgerows which are regularly maintained as part of the farming practice. As a principle, where feasible within the housing layout, these internal hedgerows should be maintained as rear garden boundaries or edges to internal footpaths to maintain habitat value.
- 5.3 All significant trees (a tree survey has been carried out, contained as Appendix B) are on the boundaries of the Site and can be retained. Any adjacent development (including roads, paths and infrastructure) must be located with regard to the British Standard BS5837:2012 to protect the rooting zone : consideration should also be given to the orientation of the dwellings and the need to avoid overshadowing of living accommodation which might promote a pressure to prune trees in the future.
- 5.4 The boundary hedgerows form an important element in the wider landscape context and are all retained, other than in locations where new access is to be provided. The hedgerow management can be varied to allow them to develop in height to mitigate views towards the new development, with additional trees and reinforcement planting as noted in the Strategy section below.
- 5.5 The three exceptions are the necessary removal of hedgerow along the south side of the Straight Mile, and at two points on Gresford Road, to accommodate the proposed access and their associated sightlines.

- 5.6 The wet ditch noted in the Ecologist's Report as an area of interest, immediately adjacent to Gresford Road and north of Home Farm, can be retained. The water body noted in the south west of the Site is ephemeral ; however, this can also be retained (further detail in Note 5 below).

Landscape Strategy

- 5.7 The landscape strategy for the Site development is illustrated by the Plan 09 and includes the following principles to mitigate the potential landscape /visual impacts.

Note 1 – Gresford Road (north)

- 5.8 The belt of mature trees at the Crown Junction end of Gresford Road is retained in full : the adjacent development (access roadway and housing) will respect the offset required to protect the root area in accordance with the *BS 5837 2012 Trees in Relation to Construction*.
- 5.9 The strategy proposes a southward extension of this belt, but planted on the east side of the wet ditch identified by the Ecologist's Report as TN5 to maintain this habitat diversity. The species would be similar to the existing (alternate scots pine and oak) where possible.

Note 2 – Straight Mile

- 5.10 The strategy aims to retain the 'straight' character by keeping all landscape structure elements parallel to the highway : sections A and B on the Plan 09 illustrate the following principles –
- Existing hedgerows – retained in full (with the sections of Cheshire Fencing), unless needing to be removed to accommodate the sightlines at the proposed access point. The character of the Straight Mile between the hedgerows is thus maintained : with the adjacent land on the south side no longer required for agricultural purposes the hedgerow can be allowed to develop in height to focus drivers' views along the road.
 - Footpath link – new footpath link running within the green buffer zone between the housing development and the road, running parallel to the hedgerow. Potential for species-rich verge between footpath and hedgerow to enhance habitat value, and open verge with wildflower seeding where the hedgerow is removed to achieve sightlines.
 - Linear woodland planting between footpath and housing boundary : planting detail to ensure that canopy trees (oak, ash, scots pine) on the northern edge run parallel to the Straight Mile. Understorey planting to develop thicket to enhance linear habitat and wildlife corridor.

Note 3 – Eastern Boundary

- 5.11 Hedgerow retained and allowed to develop in height, to add to screening effect of general hedgerow structure when approaching from the east ; existing hedge contains potential trees which can be allowed to grow as trees, subject to location relative to housing.
- 5.12 Internal footpaths to link to the public footpath running along the west edge of the adjacent field, north to Chapel Lane or south towards Gegin Lane.

Note 4 – Southern Boundary

- 5.13 New woodland planting in the south/east corner, to replicate and extend the copse established around Y Bwthyn and Maes y Rhedyn. Species to follow the Ecologist's recommendations for native woody species (Ecologist's Report Appendix C).
- 5.14 Internal footpaths to link to the public footpath running along the west edge of the adjacent field, north to Chapel Lane or south towards Gegin Lane.

Note 5 – Southern Greenspace

- 5.15 Area of community open space – this will be visible to traffic approaching northwards on Gresford Road, so the open greenspace will provide a buffer to the proposed housing. Existing stone wall along Gresford Road is retained.
- 5.16 The greenspace would be planted with trees, with species rich grassland to enhance visual quality, enhance the habitat value, reduce maintenance inputs, and to provide an informal structure to circulation. Tree planting along the boundary to Gresford Road will also filter views towards the development from the existing housing particularly southwards from Meadow Rise.
- 5.17 The area would include a children's play area, and open grass spaces for informal recreation
- 5.18 The wet hollow is retained : this is ephemeral and currently has no associated vegetation, so it could be 'moved' southwards and further from the housing, then planted with appropriate marginal / wetland species to increase the diversity.
- 5.19 The feature also has the potential to be maintained as a permanent water body, via surface water drainage from the adjacent development on the SUDS principle.
- 5.20 Footpath link to Gresford Road allowing general access via the adjacent Llay community provided at the existing gate point. This also links through the greenspace to the existing public footpath east of the Site.

Note 6 – Boundary to Gresford Road (South)

- 5.21 Retain the full length of the existing boundary hedgerow and the hedgerow trees (group of mature oak opposite Oakfield Park), other than small sections removed to provide access.
- 5.22 Reinforce hedgerow by planting along the north/east side (within the site) – to include tree species to filter views of the development and enhance the habitat corridor (species again to follow the Ecologist's recommendations for native woody species as per Ecologist's Report Appendix C).

Note 7 – Village Green

- 5.23 Central greenspace at the core of the development – further area of informal recreational space (possibly including children's play). Along with the internal road corridor landscape (**Note 8**) the space would include larger tree species, which would mature to provide a green canopy at the centre of the site, to divide the development into smaller parcels and mitigate the potential visual impact.

Note 8 – Internal Road Corridors

- 5.24 Tree planting along the internal road corridors will reinforce a green canopy, provide a new landscape structure, as well as helping to filter views of the new development.

Note 9 – Boundary to Old Meadow Court

- 5.25 The boundary is currently open, being post and rail with few lengths of hedgerow. The boundary would be planted with native hedgerow / hedgerow trees to provide screening and privacy as a green buffer, providing further habitat and improved linkages across the Site

APPENDIX A

EXPLANATION OF LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

The appraisal methodology is based on the guidance set out in the document “*Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*” (the Guidelines) published jointly by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2013).

The purpose of the LVIA process is to identify the likely significant environmental effects arising from development, including those which are positive and negative, direct and indirect, long, medium, and short term, and reversible and irreversible, as well as cumulative effects

The following terms are used throughout the assessment and are defined in the GLVIA as:

Landscape: an area, as perceived by people, the character of which is the result of the action an interaction of natural and/or human factors.

Landscape Character: a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different to another, rather than better or worse.

Landscape Effects: effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right.

Landscape Receptors: defined aspects of the landscape resource that have the potential to be affected by a proposal.

Magnitude (of effect): a term that combines judgements about the size and scale of the effect, the extent of the area over which it occurs, whether it is reversible or irreversible and whether it is short or long term in duration.

Mitigation: measures which are proposed to prevent, reduce, and where possible compensate for any adverse effects designed to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for landscape or visual effects (not taken from GLVIA).

Sensitivity: a term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposal and the value related to that receptor.

Significance: a measure of the importance or gravity of the environmental effect, defined by significance criteria specific to the environmental topic.

Visual Amenity: the overall pleasantness of the views people enjoy of their surroundings, which provides and attractive visual setting or backdrop for the enjoyment of activities of the people living, working, recreating, visiting or travelling through the area.

Visual Effects: effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.

Visual Receptors : individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be affected by a proposal : this includes people living in the area, people who work there, people passing through by road / rail / other forms of transport, people visiting, and people engaged in recreational activity of different types

The assessment considers the potential effect of the development in terms of its direct effect on the landscape resource by identifying potential changes in the character and quality of the landscape. It also considers the public perception of the landscape changes by identifying the extent of potential visibility, the sensitivity of receptors, the degree of visual intrusion and the distance of the view therefore establishing the degree of likely visual effect. Assessment of the significance of likely landscape and visual effect relies upon common sense and reasoned judgement combining a number of factors including –

- The sensitivity of the affected landscape and visual resource;
- The magnitude of the effect of the proposed development;

- Whether effects are beneficial or adverse; and
- Professional judgement.

In order to ensure that the conclusions of the landscape and visual assessment are consistent, a number of criteria have been adopted to standardise evaluation.

Landscape Sensitivity

The sensitivity of the landscape is influenced by its inherent complexity, scale and character. This assessment uses information on landscape character published at both a national and local levels to inform the baseline assessment of the landscape and to make a judgement regarding its sensitivity. Planning designations also provide a further understanding of the relative value of the landscape and associated sensitivity to change. However, the special interest and scale of the designation has to be considered against the proposal and the likelihood of the proposal affecting the primary function of that designation.

The GLVIA sets out a range of factors that can help in the identification of valued landscape and therefore inform a judgement as to their sensitivity. These include –

Landscape quality - a measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.

Scenic quality - the term used to describe landscapes that appeal primarily to the senses (primarily but not wholly the visual sense).

Rarity - the presence of rare elements or features in the landscape or the presence of a rare Landscape Character Type.

Representativeness - whether the landscape contains a particular character and/or features or elements which are considered particularly important examples.

Conservation Interests - the presence of features or wildlife, earth science or archaeological or historical and cultural interest can add to the value of the landscape as well as having value in their own right.

Recreation value - Evidence that the landscape is valued for recreational activity where experience of the landscape is important.

Perceptual aspects - a landscape may be valued for its perceptual qualities, notably wildness and/or tranquillity.

Associations - some landscape are associated with particular people, such as artists or writers, or events in history that contribute to perceptions of the natural beauty of the area.

These factors are considered against the baseline landscape to inform a judgement as to its value and sensitivity to change. Sensitivity is graded as **high**, **medium** and **low**, with high sensitivity representing landscapes with a clear strength of character and good quality and condition, and low sensitivity representing landscape of diluted character and poor quality and condition.

Magnitude of Effect on Landscape

Magnitude of effect on the landscape resource identifies the degree to which there is likely to be a change to the distinctive features/key characteristics of the receiving landscape arising from the development proposal. Issues that inform the judgement when considering the likely magnitude of effect include:

- Size or scale** - this includes the quantitative assessment of loss of physical features and the ability to replace them as part of the mitigation strategy; and the degree to which the proposed

change will affect the aesthetic or perceptual qualities of the landscape (i.e. the degree to which the proposals is at odds with the key elements or characteristics of the landscape and/or the likely of introducing complimentary or discordant elements into the landscape.

- ii) **Geographic extent** -his considers the degree to which the proposals and/or change will be felt over a geographic area. For example a designation such as National Park or AONB seeks to protect the quality and scenic beauty of a large geographic area and whilst a small development proposal might result in localised effects on the landscape this is unlikely to comprise the purpose and function of the wider designation. Magnitude of change is assessed at site level and its immediate setting, at the local setting, and if applicable at the county or regional setting (this will vary dependant on the nature of the proposed change).
- iii) **Duration and reversibility of the landscape effect:** The duration of effect for most built development will be permanent but the magnitude of that effect can be reduced through considered mitigation proposals. Therefore, the duration of effect can be assessed over two timeframes, at the completion of the scheme (Year 1) and the establishment of landscape mitigation measure (Year 15 when native planting is likely to have reached a height of 10m).

Reversibility should be taken into consideration for proposal commissioned for a defined period of time, such as minerals extraction sites and wind farms.

These factors are considered against the baseline landscape to inform a judgement as to the likely magnitude of effect the proposals will have on the landscape. Magnitude is graded as **high**, **medium**, **low**, and **negligible**, with **high** a high magnitude of effect representing a proposal at odds with scale and key characteristics of the landscape, or introducing a discordant element into the landscape setting, or having an effect across a broad geographical area albeit a change not totally at odds with the fabric of the landscape. A **negligible** magnitude of change would represent a scheme in keeping with key characteristics and the scale of the landscape, or representing a small/localised change to a character area or designation covering a broad geographic area.

Visual Sensitivity

The visual assessment identifies a number of representative views of the site taken from the local landscape setting. These representative views are taken from public rights of way, public access land and the public highway (unless otherwise stated) and assigned a sensitivity criteria of either **high**, **medium** or **low** that is dependent on the degree to which the users primary interest is the appreciation of the landscape and or other specific interests (such as cultural heritage).

The susceptibility of different visual receptors to changes in views and visual amenity is mainly a function of –

- The occupation or activity of people experiencing the view at particular locations, and –
- The extent to which their attention or interest may therefore be focused on the views and the visual amenity they experience at particular locations

The degree of sensitivity will vary for each receptor dependant on a number of factors that include location, setting and designation (used to inform sensitivity). The sensitivity of each receptor is based on the criteria set out above and professional judgement informed through field survey work - those classified as being of “high sensitivity” to change may include those in nearby residential properties or users of public rights of way. Those of “low sensitivity” may include those in their place of work or travelling through the area in cars, trains or other modes of transport, or engaged in some activity requiring their focus (for example work, or sports activity). A “medium” category is allowed for receptors between the two.

The representative views are described as part of the visual baseline assessment and consider the following criteria:

- Location of the viewpoint;
- Type of existing view;

- Distance between the observer and the site;
- Extent and context of the site and/or likely view of development proposal observed;
- Sensitivity of the observer; and
- Number of observers affected

With specific regard to distance between the observer and site and the extent of the site/development observed the following descriptions are used:

- **Open views** -uninterrupted views into the site;
- **Filtered views** - views partially obstructed by vegetation, landform, built-form or combinations of each; and
- **Distant views** - views over 1km from the site.

Magnitude of Effect on Views

Magnitude of effect on the visual amenity identifies the degree to which there is likely to be a change to the appearance of the visual setting of the landscape from the development proposal. Issues that inform the judgement when considering the likely magnitude of effect include -

- i) **Size or scale:** This includes the loss of important features to the character and composition of the views, the degree of consistency between the proposals and visual setting of the receiving landscape, and the extent of the view and proportion of that view the proposals in likely to influence or change.
- ii) **Geographic extent:** This includes the angle of view and nature in which the users with experience the proposed change, the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed change, and the extent to which the change would be noticeable.
- iii) **Duration and reversibility of the visual effect:** The duration of effect for most built development will be permanent but the magnitude of that effect can be reduced through considered mitigation proposals. Therefore, the duration of effect can be assessed over two timeframes, at the completion of the scheme (Year 1) and the establishment of landscape mitigation measure (Year15 when native planting is likely to have reached a height of 10m). Reversibility should be taken into consideration for proposal commissioned for a defined period of time, such as minerals extraction sites and wind farms.

These factors are considered against the baseline landscape to inform a judgement as to the likely magnitude of effect the proposals will have on visual amenity. Magnitude is graded as **high**, **medium**, **low**, and **negligible** with the following definition –

- High - a high magnitude of effect representing a proposal resulting in the total loss or change in view, or introducing a discordant/prominent element into the landscape setting, or having an effect across a broad geographical area albeit a change not totally at odds with the composition of the view.
- Medium – assessed as between the high and negligible categories
- Negligible magnitude of change – would represent a scheme in keeping with the established visual character and composition of view, or representing a small change viewed as part of a wider panorama.

The scheme may also result in **No Change** to the view on the basis that no part of the scheme or associated works is discernible.

Significance of Landscape and Visual Effects

The significance of likely landscape and visual effects is guided by the processes of forming a professional judgement as to how important the likely effect is. The table below illustrates this judgement process-

		SENSITIVITY		
MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
	HIGH	Major Effect	Major Effect	Moderate Effect
	MEDIUM	Major Effect	Moderate Effect	Minor Effect
	LOW	Moderate Effect	Minor Effect	Minor Effect
	NEGLIBLE	Minor Effect	Minimal Effect	Minimal Effect

Effects are defined as adverse, neutral or beneficial.

Visual effects are considered across two time horizons that include:

- **Short term effects** - the likely effect of development at year 1 following the completion of development and implementation of the landscape scheme; and
- **Long term effects** - the likely effect of development 15 years post implementation.

Significance - major and major-moderate effects are those considered to be of significance in informing the decision making process. Moderate, minor and minimal effects are not considered

APPENDIX B TREE SURVEY

Introduction :

- 1 BCA Landscape (Chartered Landscape Architects - BCAL) recorded the mature trees within the Site boundary as part of the survey and appraisal, to assist with the strategy for the development : the record is taken in accordance with the categories set out in the guidance *"BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition, and Construction"*
- 2 The survey was carried out in late September 2014. The schedule of trees and reference plan 14.543/10 are included in this Appendix.

Statutory Issues :

- 3 There are no Tree Preservation Orders applicable to the Site .

Summary :

- 4 Mature trees (T1 - T29) are restricted to the Site boundaries : internal and boundary hedgerows also contain tree species (oak, ash, sycamore) but these have been maintained as part of the stockproof hedgerow, regularly trimmed and thus considered as shrub material.
- 5 The tree reference plan 14.543/10 notes an approximate root protection areas (RPA) calculated in accordance with the requirements of section 4.6 of the BS5837:2012. In terms of future site planning this should be considered to be a 'no go' area ; any incursions deemed essential for the development and the infrastructure (roads, paths, services etc) will need to be considered in detail and clear measures identified to protect the health and well-being of the trees.
- 7 An Arboricultural Method Statement Tree Protection Plan prepared in accordance with 5.5 of the BS5837:2012 will be required, also identifying the location of secure fencing to protect the edge of the RPA, and erected / maintained in accordance with – however, localised variations to this line will be required for construction access, and will need to be negotiated with the site developer to accommodate the detail of the building submitted.
- 8 Domestic driveways and light duty footpaths can be accommodated within the RPA using the "no cut" technique as per the Arboricultural Practice Note APN1. In this, the driveway or path is built with minimal cut, using geogrid construction with gravel infill which has least impact on the root zone and allows water / air to permeate. Full detail would need to be negotiated as part of any future development proposal.

*Site at Home Farm, Llay, nr Wrexham
Landscape & Visual Appraisal*

BCA Landscape – 27th November 2014

TREE SURVEY: RECORDING NOTES							DATE OF SURVEY - 10th September 2014				Page
14.543 Home Farm, Llay							READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH PLAN -				
Tree Ref	Species	Height (m)	Stem Diam (cm)	Branch Spread (m)	First Branch Height (m)	Crown Height (m)	G/Level (m. AOD)	Life Stage	Remarks / Preliminary Management Notes	Estimated Remaining Contribution	Retention Category
T1	Scots Pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	12	54	7	6	6		M	Damage to bark on north side	40+	B2
T2	Hawthorn (<i>Crateagus monogyna</i>)	3	10-20 x3	3	n/a	1		M	Multi-stem tree, suppressed under T3	10+	C2
T3	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	11	85	11	3	2.5		M	Gnarled character typical of species	40+	A2
T4	Hawthorn (<i>Crateagus monogyna</i>)	5	30	6	1.5	2		M	One dominant leader / trunk with epicormic growth mainly on south side.	20+	B2
T5	Hawthorn (<i>Crateagus monogyna</i>)	5	20	6	1.5	1.5		M	Suppressed by dominant oaks on either side	10+	C2
T6	Elm (<i>Ulmus glabra</i>)	6	21/28/25	5	2.5	2		EM	Divided into three leaders, open canopy over understorey of holly bushes on two sides.	20+	B2
T7	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	12	90	7	2	3		M	Excellent specimen tree	40+	A2
T8	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	12	80	12	2.75	3		M	Excellent tree, spread is mainly to south, part of close group of T8/T9/T10	40+	A2

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS:

TREE REF NOS:

T: Single Tree
G: Group of Trees

MISC:

NA: Not Applicable
CV: Unknown Cultivar
m: Metres

* - denotes tree with TPO

LIFE STAGE:

Y: Young
SM: Semi-Mature
EM: Early Mature
M: Mature
OM: Over Mature

ESTIMATED REMAINING CONTRIBUTION (Yrs)

- 10 : less than 10yrs
10+ : 10 to 20 yrs
20+ : 20 to 40yrs
40+ : over 40 yrs

REF & COLOUR CODE ON PLAN

U : coloured red

A : coloured light green
A1 / A2 / A3

B : coloured mid blue
B1 / B2 / B3

C : coloured grey
C1 / C2 / C3

RETENTION CATEGORIES: (see criteria notes) (BS 5837 : 2012)

Tree which cannot be realistically retained as living trees in the context of current land use for longer than 10yrs

Tree of high quality, life expectancy 40yrs + -
A1 Mainly Arboricultural Qualities : A2 Mainly Landscape Quality : A3 Mainly Cultural incl conservation

Tree of moderate quality, life expectancy 20yrs min
B1 Mainly Arboricultural Qualities : B2 Mainly Landscape Quality : B3 Mainly Cultural incl conservation

Tree of low quality, life expectancy at least 10yrs, or young tree with stem diam below 150mm
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Where two categories are identified this indicates border line specimens

TREE SURVEY: RECORDING NOTES							DATE OF SURVEY - 10th September 2014				Page
14.543 Home Farm, Llay							READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH PLAN -				
Tree Ref	Species	Height (m)	Stem Diam (cm)	Branch Spread (m)	First Branch Height (m)	Crown Height (m)	G/Level (m. AOD)	Life Stage	Remarks / Preliminary Management Notes	Estimated Remaining Contribution	Retention Category
T9	Scots Pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	14	41	6	6	6		M	Tall straight specimen growing through canopy of T10	20+	B2
T10	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	12	32/32	6	3	4		M	Divides into 2 at 2m : requires removal of dead wood	20+	B2
T11	Scots Pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	14	40	6	7	7		M	Tall straight specimen	40+	A2
T12	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	12	72	6	2	2.5		M	Requires removal of dead wood	40+	B2
T13	Scots Pine (<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>)	14	50	7	6	6		M	Root flair partially buried to depth of 50cm - soil requires careful removal to restore ground level. Suppressed on N and E side by T14/T15	20+	A2
T14	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	9	52	7	3	3		M	Root flair partially buried to depth of 50cm - soil requires careful removal to restore ground level.	40+	B2
T15	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	9	80	8	3.5	3		M	Arched form, bends to W then straightens	40+	B2
T16	Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	4	45 /17	3	3.5	3.5		SM	Damaged main leader (45cm girth) is dead providing dead wood habitat : regrowth is to NW	20+	B2

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MISC:

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* - denotes tree with TPO

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ESTIMATED REMAINING CONTRIBUTION (Yrs)

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RETENTION CATEGORIES: (see criteria notes) (BS 5837 : 2012)

Tree which cannot be realistically retained as living trees in the context of current land use for longer than 10yrs

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T17	Oak <i>(Quercus robur)</i>	10	82	8	3.5	4		M	Requires removal of dead wood	40+	A2
T18	Scots Pine <i>(Pinus sylvestris)</i>	12	50	6	6	6		M	Canopy dominant to SW	40+	A2
T19	Oak <i>(Quercus robur)</i>	9	54	7.5	2.5	2.5		M	Dog rose at base, located at top end of ditch line	40+	B2
T20	Scots Pine <i>(Pinus sylvestris)</i>	10	50	6	8	8		M	Leans towards E, close to ditch line	20+	B2
T21	Scots Pine <i>(Pinus sylvestris)</i>	10	50 estimate	5	6	5.5		M	Heavy ivy growth on trunk, leans S towards Gresford Road	20+	B2
T22	Scots Pine <i>(Pinus sylvestris)</i>	9	45	4.5	4	4.5	86.35	M	On edge of Site at junction with hedgerow boundary of Home Farm	20+	B2
T23	Hawthorn <i>(Crateagus monogyna)</i>	4	n/a	4	n/a	1.75	85.20 estimated	OM	M/stem specimen isolated within pasture south of Home Farm entrance	10+	C2
T24	Oak <i>(Quercus robur)</i>	6	54	9	2	2	84.40	M	Within hawthorn hedgerow boundary of Gresford Lane ; adjacent elder group	40+	B2

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T25	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	8	62	10	4	3.5	84.72	M	Within hawthorn hedgerow boundary of Gresford Lane ; divide into 2 at 2.5m above g/level	40+	B2
T26	Oak (<i>Quercus robur</i>)	8	62	8	3	3	84.60	M	Within hawthorn hedgerow boundary of Gresford Lane ; lean S towards road, remove dead wood.	40+	B2
T27	Ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>)	6	18	4	2.5	3	81.05	SM	Young tree isolated on east side of Gresford Rd close to Forest Rd junction. Located next to stone retaining/boundary wall	40+	A2
T28	Lombardy Poplar (<i>Populus x nigra "Italica"</i>)	18	62	5	6	7	79.20 estimated	M	Within S/E boundary as it crosses hollow within curtilage of Y Bwthyn. Prominent vertical form in landscape	20+	B2
T29	Lombardy Poplar (<i>Populus x nigra "Italica"</i>)	18	60	5	6	7	79.20 estimated	M	Pair with T28 above. Divides into 2 co-dominant trunks at 6m	20+	B2

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