

PROPOSED SOLAR PARK: LAND TO THE WEST OF DELPH ROAD

APPRAISAL OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

PREPARED BY PEGASUS GROUP ON BEHALF OF LIGHTSOURCE RENEWABLE ENERGY LTD | FEBRUARY 2015 | L.0321_06-C



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Appraisal of Landscape and Visual Effects (ALVE) has been prepared by Pegasus Group, on behalf of Light Source Renewable Energy Ltd.

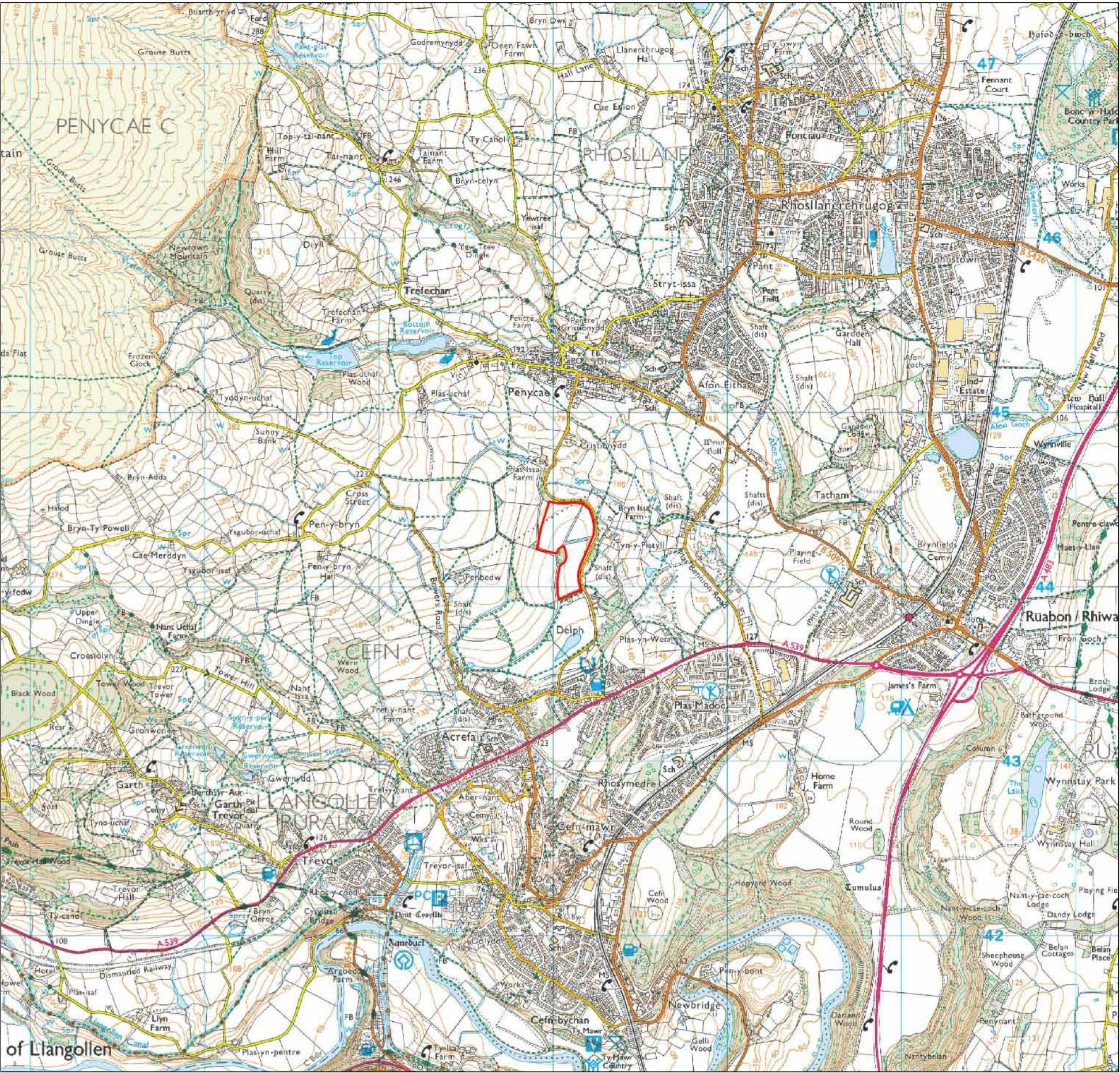
1.2 The ALVE has been prepared by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute and considers the potential effects of the Proposed Development upon:

- Landscape elements and features such as vegetation, topography and water bodies;
- Landscape character; and
- Visual amenity.

1.3 The appraisal was undertaken in December 2014 for the construction of a solar farm and associated infrastructure. The location of the Proposed Development is as shown on the Site Location Plan, Figure 1.

1.4 The main objectives of the ALVE are as follows:

- To identify, evaluate and describe the current landscape character of the site and its surroundings and also any notable individual landscape elements and features within the site;
- To determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed;
- To identify potential visual receptors (i.e. people who would be able to see the development) and evaluate their sensitivity to the type of changes proposed; and
- To identify and describe any effects of the development in so far as they affect the landscape and/or views of it and to evaluate the magnitude of change due to these effects.



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Figure 1: Site Location Plan

Scale: 1:25,000 @ A3

2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The LA has been undertaken with regard to the following best practice:
- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (3rd edition) – Landscape Institute/IEMA (2013);
 - Photography and photomontage and landscape and visual assessment (2011) – Landscape Institute Advice Note 01/11/13.
- 2.2 In accordance with the published guidance, landscape (elements and character) and visual impacts are assessed separately. The detailed methodology is outlined in Appendix 1.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the changes arising from the Proposed Development are reversible once the proposed solar farm is dismantled and the site restored at the end of its life. However, the duration of the solar farm (effectively a generation) means that the changes to landscape and visual amenity are considered as permanent for the purposes of this assessment.

3.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 3.1 The Application Site is located approximately 661 m to the north of Acrefair centred on OS grid reference SJ 28235 343885. The nearby settlement of Pen ycae is located approximately 1.2 km to the north west, and Stryt-issa approximately 1.22 km to the north east. The larger settlements of Ruabon and Cefn Mawr lie approximately 2.28 km to the east and 1.71 km to the south respectively.
- 3.2 The site lies within the administrative boundary of Wrexham Borough Council in the county of Clywd.
- 3.3 The Application Site consists of 3 small scale individual parcels of land that extend over an area covering 10.67 ha currently used for pasture.
- 3.4 The site is bounded to the north and east by a belt of woodland with a small area of woodland comprising pine and birch between the southern edge of the Application Site between the western and southern field.
- 3.5 The fields are broadly regular in shape and are surrounded by pastoral farmland constituting fields separated by some hedgerows and woodland blocks. Species within the hedgerows include native species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, gorse and hazel.
- 3.6 The site is bounded to the east by Delph Road which is vegetated along its eastern boundary both with a mixture of native and coniferous species including Pine, Hazel, Oak and Birch and some areas of scrub which comprise of Gorse.
- 3.7 To the west a mixture of hedgerow and woodland characterise the boundary and the landform gradually begins to rise towards the horizon and comprises pastoral fields. The woodland block contains Birch and Pine with a hedgerow understorey containing native species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, dog rose, gorse, bramble and hazel.
- 3.8 To the north the site is enclosed by a woodland belt comprising Pine, Birch and Oak along Delph Road and to the south a access track leading to Talponciau Farm which is part screened by existing scrub / hedgerow vegetation with occasional intermittent sections of open post and rail fencing. Several over head power lines cut across the site in a east to west direction and characterise the skyline.
- 3.9 To the east and west areas of remnant extractive industry are scattered throughout the landscape.
- 3.10 The terrain of the site is gently sloping from Delph Road which is approximately 162 m above ordnance datum (AOD) to the western edge of the site which at its highest point is 170 m AOD before falling to the south western corner to 163 m AOD. The landform then rises further upward (to the west), towards Pen-y-bryn which is 223 m AOD. To the south the landform gradually rises from 163 m AOD in the south west

corner to Plas Issa Farm which is 175 m AOD reaching approximately 192 m AOD around the settlement of Pen y Cae. From the north the site slopes downward from approximately 171 m AOD in the northwest corner of the site to 154 m AOD in the south east corner of the site. The centre of the site is approximately 155 m AOD, and rises to the east and west on either side creating a concave form on either side.

- 3.11 The Application Site contains no PRoW Public Rights of Way (PRoW) however there are several in close proximity to the south, east and west. The closest PRoW being CEF/ X -4, which runs along the southern boundary of the Application Site from Delph Road aligning to a south west to and then east. Other PRoW in close proximity to the site include the following which have been taken from Wrexham County Borough's online Definitive Public Rights of Way Map. Please refer to drawing L.0321_08 (Figure 5).
- CEF/X-7, approximately 230 m to the west of the site;
 - CEF/X-5, approximately 175 m to the south west;
 - PEN/ X-8, approximately 161 m to the west;
 - CEF/ 60, approximately 11 m to the east;
 - PEN/53, approximately 11 m to the east;
 - Pen/ 5, approximately 373 m to the north east;
 - CEF/61, approximately 625 m to the east;
 - CEF/X1, approximately 433 m to the south;
 - Pen X-9, approximately 162 m to the north-west and
 - Pen/35, approximately 494 m to the north.
- 3.12 There are other PRoW within the 2 km study area to the north, west east and south, some of which are clearly marked and others which form small undefined access tracks across the landscape. Beyond 2 km other PRoW are present throughout the landscape, however given the low lying nature of the proposal and distance it is not anticipated that they will be affected by the Proposed Development.
- 3.13 The Talponcian Farm complex, which is outside the site boundary, is located directly to the south of the site and is served by a track which forms part of PRoW CEF/X-4 and connects to Delph Road to the south west. There are several other isolated farmsteads including Bryn Issa Farm to the north and Tyn-y-Pistell to the east within 500 m of the Application Site.
- 3.14 There are no water features or bodies apparent within the Application Site. However there is one large artificial pond 23 m to the south.

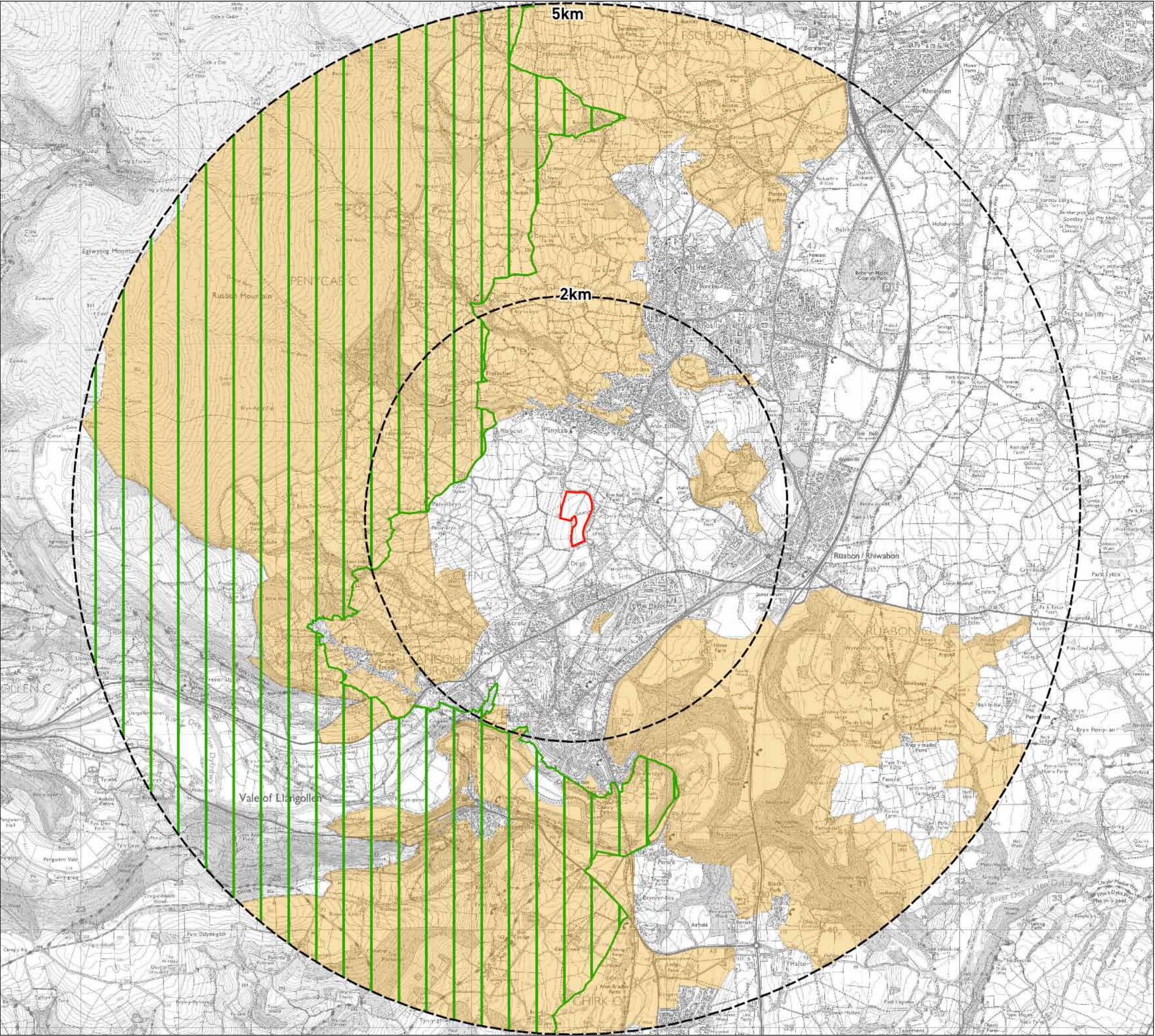
Landscape Designations

- 3.15 The Application Site does not lie within any statutory or non statutory Landscape Designations. The western the edge of the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is situated approximately 1.52 km from the Application Site. Within Wrexham Borough Council's UDP the site is locally designated as a Green Barrier which is within the Green Belt and a Special Landscape Area known as Ardunel Tirlum Arbenning is present.

Description of the Surrounding Area

- 3.16 The landscape immediately surrounding the Application Site is a mixture of pastoral farmland interspersed with several small settlements, isolated farmsteads and residential properties linked by predominately minor roads. In contrast to the north, east and south areas of medium to large scale human influence are present. These areas include transport corridors comprising the A539, approximately 651 m to the south of the site and the A483, situated approximately 2.1 km to the east. These are connected by smaller B roads such as the B5097 and medium to large scale settlements that have developed in a ribbon like fashion along their routes.
- 3.17 To the north the linear settlement of Penyycae is bisected by the B5097 and merges into the edge of the larger settlement of Rhoslanerchrugog to the north east. A series of minor roads connect several isolated farmsteads and properties within a pastoral landscape, defined by hedgerows and occasional blocks of woodland which follow small the course of narrow watercourses cutting across the landscape. There are a number of PRoW cutting across the landscape and long ranging views are apparent across the valley towards Acrefair and Llangollen. Human influence is present with the presence of pastoral fields, including several extensive farm complexes and a reservoir near Trefechan Farm. Disused quarries and mineshafts are present reflecting the historical industrial usage of the land.
- 3.18 The landscape to the south (in contrast) contains large scale human influence including the settlements of Acrefair, Cefn Mawr and Plas Madoc bordering the A539 which which forms a major infrastructure routes within the landscape approximately 651 km to the south west of the site.
- 3.19 Other major infrastructure routes cut across the landscape including the A483 to the east following the course of the main railway line and the A5 to the south, which follows the course of the River Dee along the Llangollen Valley. The River Dee forms the edge of the Pontcysyllte World Heritage Site which includes Pontcysyllte Aquaduct which is approximately 2.4 km to the south west of the Application Site.

- 3.20 The upper slopes within Llangollen Valley are heavily wooded and rise steeply from the valley floor with the settlement of Froncysyllte above overlooking the valley. Offa's Dyke Path and Llwybr Ceiriog Trail form nationally recognised routes across the landscape from which there are long ranging views across the valley which vary according to the prevailing weather conditions.
- 3.21 The landscape to the west comprises a rural and predominately pastoral landscape and includes minor roads linking small settlements and isolated farmsteads. Steep valley side contain medium scale blocks of woodland along the Llangollen Valley which reduce as the landform gradually rises to Ruabon Mountain and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB which is edged by several isolated farmsteads and occasional blocks of woodland. The edge of the AONB forms a noticeable contrast to the surrounding landscape to the east and south along the lower valley slopes, with a distinct absence of human influence present other than the remnants of former mine shafts and disused quarries. A thick carpet of heather and bracken dominate the open landscape forming moorland with occasional trees and informal access tracks cutting across the AONB.
- 3.22 To the east of the site the landscape is rural in nature until it reaches the edge of Ruabon which runs alongside the A483. Human influence includes several industrial units, a disused clay pit and Bounchy Hafod Country Park and the A483 and Arriva Railway line. Further east beyond Ruabon the landscape returns to being rural in nature with several blocks of woodland and minor roads cutting across the landscape interlinking small settlements.
- 3.23 The existing landform and vegetation surrounding the site means it is visually well-screened and is generally only seen from locations very close to its boundaries and elevated positions to the north and west.
- 3.24 Fields are typically pastoral small to medium sized and geometric in shape (i.e. straight-sided or simple shapes), used for pasture. Woodland cover is limited except along the Llangollen Valley and to the west.
- 3.25 Long distance views across the valley are apparent from elevated areas such as Ruabon Mountain to the north and along the upper slopes of the Llangollen Valley. Distant views from the upper slopes of the valley are dependent on the prevailing weather, with the surrounding urban infrastructure and settlements merging into the wider context of the landscape along the lower valley slopes Open and rural views are available from the upper valley slopes towards the AONB and SLA.



KEY

Site Boundary

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Special Landscape Area

Figure 2: Landscape Designations Plan

Scale: 1:40,000 @ A3

4.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The layout of the Proposed Development is shown at Figure 3.
- Access Tracks

4.2 Where possible, access would be via the existing public highway to the east of the site from Delph Road. Where required access onto the site of the public highway will be constructed using new stone tracks constructed on top of a geo-textile membrane.
- Proposed Development

4.3 The proposed site layout and planting proposals are illustrated in Figure 3. The development would consist of rows of solar panels known as strings. The panels are composed of photovoltaic cells and are designed to maximise the absorbency of the sun’s rays and minimise solar glare. The strings would run across the field enclosure.

4.4 Panels will be offset 6m from the field boundaries in order to provide for access around the edge of each field and to ensure the continuing health of existing trees and vegetation.

4.5 Each string of panels would be mounted on a rack supported by pile driven foundations, without the need for concrete foundations. Between each string of panels there would be a gap to avoid any shadowing effect from one panel to another. The panels would be tilted at around 25 to 35 degrees from the horizontal and are orientated to face south towards the sun. The maximum height of the arrays will respond to the site’s topography and will be capped at 2.15m above ground level along their highest edge.

4.6 The panels will be black or dark blue, non reflective and designed to absorb, not reflect, daylight and convert it to renewable energy.

4.7 Associated infrastructure would be required including maintenance access tracks, inverter/transformer cabins and a sub-station. Cabling which links the panels/inverters to the substation would be routed via a network of shallow trenches which would be backfilled.

4.8 The panel arrays would be connected to a network of inverter stations located at appropriate positions across the site, which in turn will be connected to the local electricity grid via a sub-station. 2.0 m high deer fencing will be installed to the perimeter of the site.

- Landscaping and Planting

4.9 The proposed landscaping and planting are indicated on Figure 3

4.10 The areas beneath the solar panels would remain as grass and would be managed by low intensity sheep grazing or a cutting regime to encourage species diversity. Other areas would be seeded with a locally-appropriate wildflower mix.

4.11 Gaps in existing hedgerows greater than 1m will be infilled with native hedgerow species and trees to provide visual screening where necessary.

4.12 Along the southern boundary of the Application Site the existing hedgerow will be infilled using a native hedgerow mix where gaps are greater than 1 m or the existing vegetation is less robust. Where there is post and rail fencing in place as a boundary a new native hedgerow will be planted and maintained at 2.4 m

4.13 Along the eastern edge of the site along Delph Road where there is existing scrub this will be removed and a native tree belt planted in order to screen the Proposed Development.

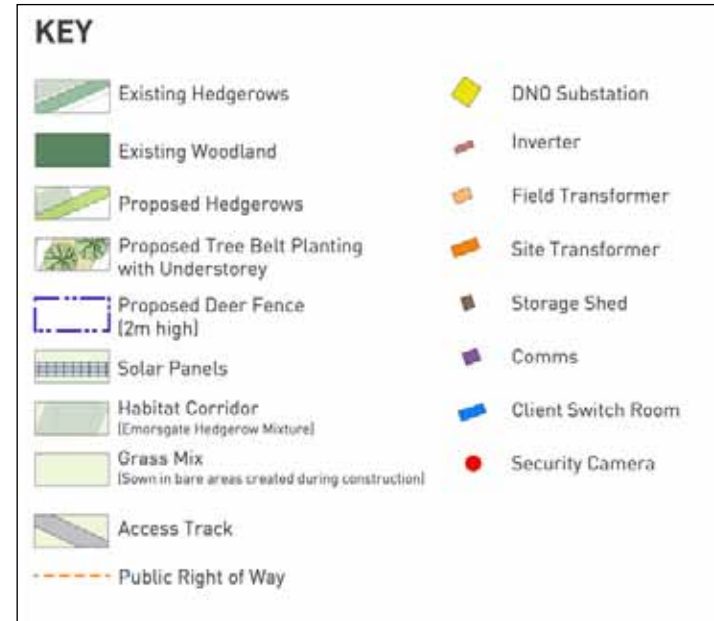


Figure 3: Proposed Site Layout

NOT TO SCALE

5.0 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy		
5.1	Planning Policy Wales (7th Edition, published July 2014) (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. Of particular relevance from a landscape and visual perspective are Chapter 4 of PPW, Planning for Sustainability, which includes policies for promoting sustainability through good design, and Chapter 5 Conserving and Improving Natural Heritage and the Coast which includes policies to promote the conservation of landscape and biodiversity.	
5.2	Paragraph 4.6.4 of PPW relates to the conservation and enhancement of the countryside, including references to protecting and enhancing the countryside and maintaining it as a sustainable energy source. Paragraphs 5.2.9 and 5.2.10 relate to the protection and enhancement of trees and woodlands.	
5.3	Paragraph 5.3.11 relates to SLAs, stating that the designation of an area as an SLA should not unduly restrict acceptable development.	
5.4	PPW Technical Advice Note 8 on “Planning for Renewable Energy” also states at Paragraph 3.15: “Other than in circumstances where visual impact is critically damaging to a listed building, ancient monument or a conservation area vista, proposals for appropriately designed solar thermal and PV systems should be supported”.	
Local Planning Policy		
5.5	The current development plan in force in the area consists of the The LDP provides the framework for decisions to be made up until 2021 on how land is used and developed. With the LDP some areas are identified for new development whilst other areas are protected, and it also contains detailed policies which control the form of new development and setting out what new development should look like.	
5.6	Key policies of the LDP which are of relevance to the site area are detailed below:	
<u>Strategic Policy : The Broad Location Of Development</u>		
5.7	Policy PS1 New development for housing, employment, and community services will be directed to within defined settlement limits/employment areas.	
5.8	Policy PS2 Development must not materially detrimentally affect countryside, landscape/townscape character, open space, or the quality of the natural environment.	
5.9	Policy PS3 Development should use previously developed brownfield land comprising vacant,derelict or underused land in preference to the use of greenfield land, wherever possible,particularly so where greenfield land is of ecological, landscape or amenity value, or comprisesagricultural land of grades 1, 2 or 3a quality.	
5.10	Policy PS4 Development should maintain the existing settlement pattern and character and be integrated with the existing transport network to help reduce the overall need to travel and encourage the use of alternatives to the car.	
<u>Policy Ps12 Renewable Energy</u>		
5.11	‘Proposals for the generation of energy from renewable sources will be supported provided that the wider environmental benefits are not outweighed by any detrimental impacts of the Proposed Development(including any electricity transmission facilities needed) on the landscape, public safety, and the local environment’.	
<u>Policy Ec1 Green Barriers</u>		
5.12	‘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’.	
<u>Ec4 Trees And Hedgerows</u>		
5.13	‘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’.	
<u>Ec5 Special Landscape Areas</u>		
5.14	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.	
5.15	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.	
<u>Area Of Outstanding Natural Beauty</u>		
5.16	‘During the plan period the existing Clwydian Range Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty may be extended to include sections of Ruabon Mountain, and the Berwyn Mountain Range, which includes much of the Ceiriog Valley, may be designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Council supports such a proposal. Such designation would recognise the national importance of that landscape and the need to protect, manage, and enhance it. Landscape conservation would be the primary consideration and development which detracts from the character and appearance of the landscape would be resisted. Any development permitted must be of the highest standard of design, and use materials appropriate to the locality’.	
<u>Emerging Policy</u>		
5.17	Wrexham County Borough Council submitted the Local Development Plan (LDP) to the Welsh Government and the Planning Inspectorate for Examination on the 30th September 2011.	
5.18	Examination of the LDP began on 25th January 2012. However, due to fundamental concerns raised by the Planning Inspector conducting the examinations, the hearing sessions were suspended. An Exploratory Meeting was held on 23rd February 2012 to discuss the most appropriate action to deal with these concerns.	
5.19	At the meeting on 23rd February 2012, the Council accepted that in light of the significant nature of the concerns raised by the Inspector in his Preliminary Findings Report, Feb 2012 (ED23) that there was no alternative other than to withdraw the Plan. The Inspector confirmed this in his letter to the Council, 27th Feb 2012 (ED27).	
5.20	Wrexham County Borough Council is preparing the Local Development Plan (LDP2) which will replace the current adopted Unitary Development Plan. The LDP will be a long-term land use and development strategy focused on achieving sustainable development and will: • Guide development for housing, employment, retail and other uses • Set out policies that will be used to decide planning applications and; • Safeguard areas of land requiring protection or enhancement.	

Response to Policy

- 5.21 The form and pattern of existing boundaries surrounding the site would remain substantially unaltered, and visibility of the development would be reduced by retaining existing vegetation within the immediate vicinity of the site. Such boundary vegetation would be improved by greater levels of management.
- 5.22 The Proposed Development will maintain the openness of the extensive area designated locally as a Green Barrier area due to the low lying nature of the proposals and retention within the existing Application Site boundary therefore it is not anticipated that the Proposed Development will conflict with the purpose of the Green Barrier.
- 5.23 Although the Application Site is within close proximity to the Special Landscape Area (SLA) Ardul Tirlum Arbennig, it is not within the boundary of the SLA and at its closest point is approximately 1.5 km away it. Therefore the Proposed Development would have little effect on the landscape and visual amenity of the Special Landscape Area (SLA) outside its immediate environs due to the retention of existing landscape features of the area and being low lying.
- 5.24 The Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB has now been extended to include part of the Ruabon Mountains, which at its closest point lies approximately 1.5 km to the west of the site, and approximately 2.3 km to the south. Therefore development proposals are of high quality and have been purposefully designed in terms of scale, materials, form and location so as to have minimal effect upon the character of the local landscape, adjacent SLA and AONB.

6.0 EFFECT ON LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS & FEATURES

6.1 Existing landscape features and elements within and immediately surrounding the Application Site are shown on the Landscape Features Plan Figure 4.

Topography

6.2 Due to the low lying nature of the Proposed Development it is unlikely that major changes to existing ground levels would be required. There would however be some localised changes to facilitate the placing of the transformer buildings and substations. With a low sensitivity to the type of works proposed and negligible magnitude of change, there would be a negligible effect on the site topography.

Trees and Hedgerows

6.3 All existing trees and hedgerows would be retained and protected during the construction phase of the development. Once the main construction phase is completed, additional tree and hedge planting would be undertaken to provide additional visual screening and landscape enhancements.

6.4 There would be negligible effect on the existing trees and hedgerows during the construction phase of the development, resulting in a negligible effect. Once the additional enhancement planting is completed there would be a minor beneficial effect on the local tree and hedgerow resource. As the proposed planting becomes established and grows and the improved management of the existing vegetation starts to take effect, this would increase to a low magnitude of change resulting in a minor beneficial effect.

Herbaceous Vegetation

6.5 There would be some disruption to the existing grassland in the areas under the solar panels during the installation of the solar panels, cabling and associated infrastructure, but this would be reinstated/ reseeded at the end of the main construction phase using a species-rich grass mix. After 25 years the site would be restored to pastoral use on decommissioning of the solar park.

6.6 The existing grassland is considered to be of medium sensitivity to development of the type proposed. Overall there would be a negligible magnitude of change to this grassland resulting in a negligible long term beneficial effect.

Public Rights of Way (PRoW)

6.7 The Application Site contains no PRoW Public Rights of Way that run through the site, however there are several in close proximity to the south, east and west. The closest PRoW is CEF/ X -4, which runs along the southern boundary of the Application Site from Delph Road running in a south west to east direction. Other PRoW in close proximity to the site include the following. Please refer to drawing L.0321_08_A, Figure 5.

- CEF/X-7, approximately 230 m to the west of the site;
- CEF/X-5, approximately 175 m to the south west;
- PEN/ X-8, approximately 161 m to the west;
- CEF/ 60, approximately 11 m to the east;
- PEN/53, approximately 11 m to the east;
- Pen/ 5, approximately 373 m to the north east;
- CEF/61, approximately 625 m to the east;
- CEF/X1, approximately 433 m to the south;
- Pen X-9, approximately 162 m to the north-west and
- Pen/35, approximately 494 m to the north.

6.8 Users of CEF/ X4, PEN/ X-8, CEF/ X7 and PEN/35 will experience moderate to minor adverse impacts in Year 1 due to their proximity to the Application Site, gaps in the existing vegetation and farm access gates which allow open views onto the site. In the case of PEN/ X-8 and PEN/35 it is considered/ anticipated that any views will reduce over time with the establishment of mitigation planting.

6.9 Most of the public rights of way respond to the existing field boundaries and therefore many of the views of the Proposed Development would be restricted through the layering effect of existing vegetation and the sloping topography.

6.10 Beyond 2 km other PRoW are present throughout the landscape, however given the low lying nature of the proposal and the distance of these PRoW from the site and factors such as intervening landform and built infrastructure it is anticipated they will not be affected by the proposals directly.

Watercourses and Waterbodies

6.11 There are no watercourses or water bodies within the Application Site which would be directly affected by the proposed development. There is a large artificial pond 23 m to the south of the site, however it is not anticipated this will be affected by the proposed development.

Summary

6.12 Effects on landscape elements and features can be summarised as:

- Negligible effect on site topography;
- Long-term minor beneficial effect on trees and hedgerows within the Application Site; and
- Negligible effect on the existing grassland within the site;
- Major to Moderate effect on PRoWs in Year 1; and
- No effect on watercourses and waterbodies.

6.13 Overall there would therefore be a minor adverse to negligible long-term beneficial effect on landscape features and elements.



Figure 4: Existing Landscape Features Plan
NOT TO SCALE

7.0 EFFECT ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

National Landscape Character Area	
7.1	Landscape Character Assessment in Wales has been undertaken by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) in partnership with the Unitary Authorities and National Parks, using the formally adopted LANDMAP methodology. LANDMAP was developed to provide a nationwide, consistent assessment of landscape character, identifying key landscape characteristics and qualities in order to inform planning policy and decisions. The information is available on-line as a GIS based dataset on the LANDMAP website (www.landmap.ccw.gov.uk).
7.2	LANDMAP comprises five datasets known as ‘Aspects’ or layers. These are sub-divided into geographical ‘Aspect Areas’, forming the equivalent of character areas. The five Aspects are: • Visual and Sensory; • Historic Landscape; • Cultural Landscape; • Geological Landscape; and • Landscape Habitats
7.3	For any given location, all five Aspects are recorded allowing for the inter-relationship between them in forming the landscape character to be understood. Furthermore, key characteristics occurring for different Aspects in the same area helps to reinforce their importance. A consistent methodology has been used to assess and evaluate each Aspect, resulting in a structured and consistent set of survey records.
7.4	For each Aspect Area, important characteristics and qualities, management and an evaluation of condition, trend and value are detailed. Each of the Aspects is evaluated in order to provide an indication of their sensitivity and value. A number of ‘Evaluation Criteria’ are used, in order to identify an ‘Overall Evaluation’. An ‘Overall Evaluation Score’ is then provided by LANDMAP, defining the Aspect’s importance. These are defined as: • Outstanding – of International or National importance; • High – of Regional or County importance; • Moderate – of Local importance; and • Low – of little or no importance.
7.5	By identifying both the important landscape receptors and characteristics of an Aspect Area and its value and importance, LANDMAP allows for a thorough and consistent baseline to be established as part of the assessment.
7.6	The characteristics, value, management recommendations and overall evaluations for each of the aspect areas relating to the site and its landscape context are detailed below. This has allowed for the sensitivity

of each aspect area and the overall landscape character of the combined aspects, to be established.

7.7 By identifying both the important landscape receptors and characteristics of an Aspect Area and its value and importance, LANDMAP allows for a thorough and consistent baseline to be established as part of the assessment.

7.8 The characteristics, value, management recommendations and overall evaluations for each of the aspect areas relating to the site and its landscape context are detailed below within 2km for Visual and Sensory Aspects and 1km for the other remaining Aspects as agreed with the Case Officer at Rhonda Cyon Taf. This has allowed for the sensitivity of each aspect area and the overall landscape character of the combined aspects, to be established.

**Visual and Sensory
North, West and South of Rhos WRXHMVS020.**

Characteristics

- A broad aspect forming the middle upper to mid slopes of the area rising to Ruabon Mountain;
- Area predominately comprises small to medium scale agricultural field pattern with a bias to pasture and livestock farming;
- Undulating sloping topography;
- Field boundaries are defined by mature but sparse hedgerows with limited hedgerow trees and supplemented with fences;
- Small stream valleys and dips punctuate the overall slope and contain wooded areas and small copses of mixed deciduous woodland;
- Sense of place is not well defined as the area itself has no specific focus with views largely directed to the east over the lower lying land and lowlands towards Ruabon and the A483 corridor or are short distance and relatively limited by underlying topography; and
- General settlement pattern is scattered farmstead and small clustered villages with the area bisected in places by larger settlements at Rhosllanerchrugog, and Penycae.

Management Recommendations

7.9 To enhance existing habitats of field margins and hedgerow boundaries and urban fringe with species diversification and the re- introduction of traditional land management techniques.

7.10 Restore field boundaries and woodland habitats improving age range and species type.

Overall Evaluation

7.11 The WRXHMVS020 Visual and Sensory Aspect Area has a combination of both attractive and unattractive visual elements which result in a ‘Moderate’ LANDMAP evaluation (i.e. of local importance).

Historic Landscape – Gardden WRXHMHL023

Characteristics

7.12 The existing landscape is characterised by a predominately mixed irregular hedged fieldscape between Rhosllanerchrugog and Ruabon resulting from the reclamation of former quarries and explosive works within the area. A Handful of larger post medieval farmhouses survive on the fringes of the area and the northern un industrialised part around Gardden contains an Iron Age Fort.

Management Recommendations

7.13 No management comments are provided on the datasheet for the Historic Landscape Aspect.

Overall Evaluation

7.14 The Gardden Historic Landscape Aspect Area has an overall LANDMAP evaluation of ‘Moderate’(i.e. of local importance).

**Cultural Landscape Myndydd Rhiwabon Esclusham
(lower slopes) WRXHMCL017.**

Characteristics

7.15 Very large area variously protected by landscape and other designations such as Special Landscape Areas, Sites of Special Scientific Interest or as Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation. The area contains examples of historic and contemporary human occupation and exploitation in the form of historic monuments, redundant industrial workings, transport systems and forestry.

Management Recommendations

7.16 Support for interpretation of the area’s lead-mining history at Minera.

Overall Evaluation

7.17 The overall LANDMAP evaluation for the area in respect of the cultural landscape is assessed as being ‘High’ (i.e. of regional or county importance) for its historic value and for the interpretation of the lead mining industry at Minera.

Geological Landscape – Delph WRXHMGL014	
Characteristics	
7.18	The Lower Sirhowy Valley area is described as “ relatively gentle slopes to the SE end of the Ruabon – Esclusham Mountain dominated by glacial clays forming a veneer over the Upper Carboniferous ‘Coal Measures’. Characterised by extensive traces of former coal mining including shafts and tips and sites of large opencast, now restored”.
Management Recommendations	
7.19	“Conserve as existing – ensure that no significant features of geological or geomorphological significance are lost to future development and that surviving historical mine workings are conserved and assessed for their geological value”.
Overall Evaluation	
7.20	The overall LANDMAP evaluation for the geological landscape of the area is ‘Moderate’(i.e. of local importance).
Landscape Habitats – Talwrn Grassland	
Characteristics	
7.21	The key features of the area are as follows: • Main habitat is improved grassland with little ecological value. Other habitats include semi-natural broadleaved woodland, semi-improved neutral grassland and arable landuse; • Stock grazing and cultivation are the main land management activities.
Management Recommendations	
	• Encourage appropriate maintenance of ponds and enhance gappy hedges. • Plant woodland to aid biological connectivity.
Overall Evaluation	
7.22	The Talwrn Grassland Landscape Habitats Landscape Aspect Area has an overall LANDMAP evaluation of ‘High’(i.e. of national and international importance).
7.23	The LANDMAP collector information sheets for each of the above aspect areas is given in Appendix 2.
7.24	In addition Wrexham have produced a Local Planning Guidance note based on Wrexham LANDMAP (adopted in 2004). The Application Site is identified as falling within the Landscape Character Area 7b ‘ Cefn

	Mawr’. It is described as being ‘ set on a ridge overlooking the scenic Dee Valley at the entrance to the Vale of Llangollen, this area, including Cefn Mawr, Acrefair, Plas Madoc and Rhosymedre, has a significant industrial heritage.
7.25	Cefn Mawr is one of four character areas in Wrexham which have a mixed rural and urban landscape. The other areas are Chirk, Rhosllanerchrugog- Rhostyllen and West Wrexham Ridges and Valleys’.
7.26	The landscape character area is summarised below: • ‘Fragmented area of urban villages and open space with a legacy of industrial land uses; • Densely built hillside village of Cefn Mawr set on a ridge with good views over the Dee Valley; • Chemical Industries; • Restored farmland to north, and much green space within settlements; • Important area for industrial archaeology; • Need for sympathetic regeneration without loss of heritage’.
7.27	The report then breaks down the key characteristics of the area into the 5 LANDMAP Aspects as detailed below:

Visual Character	
	• ‘Several communities of different character make up the urban area, including tightly built Cefn Mawr set on a ridge; the 1960’s housing estate of Plas Madoc, and Acrefair, seen from the Llangollen Road tourist route; • Good Views to the south over the Dee Valley towards the Berwyn foothills; • Unslightly industrial development prominent in views from the south west; • Much ‘brownfield’ land including old sandstone quarries, forming extensive open space network; • Countryside to the north is recovering from past industrial exploitation and though improving visually, vegetation is immature and drainage disrupted’.

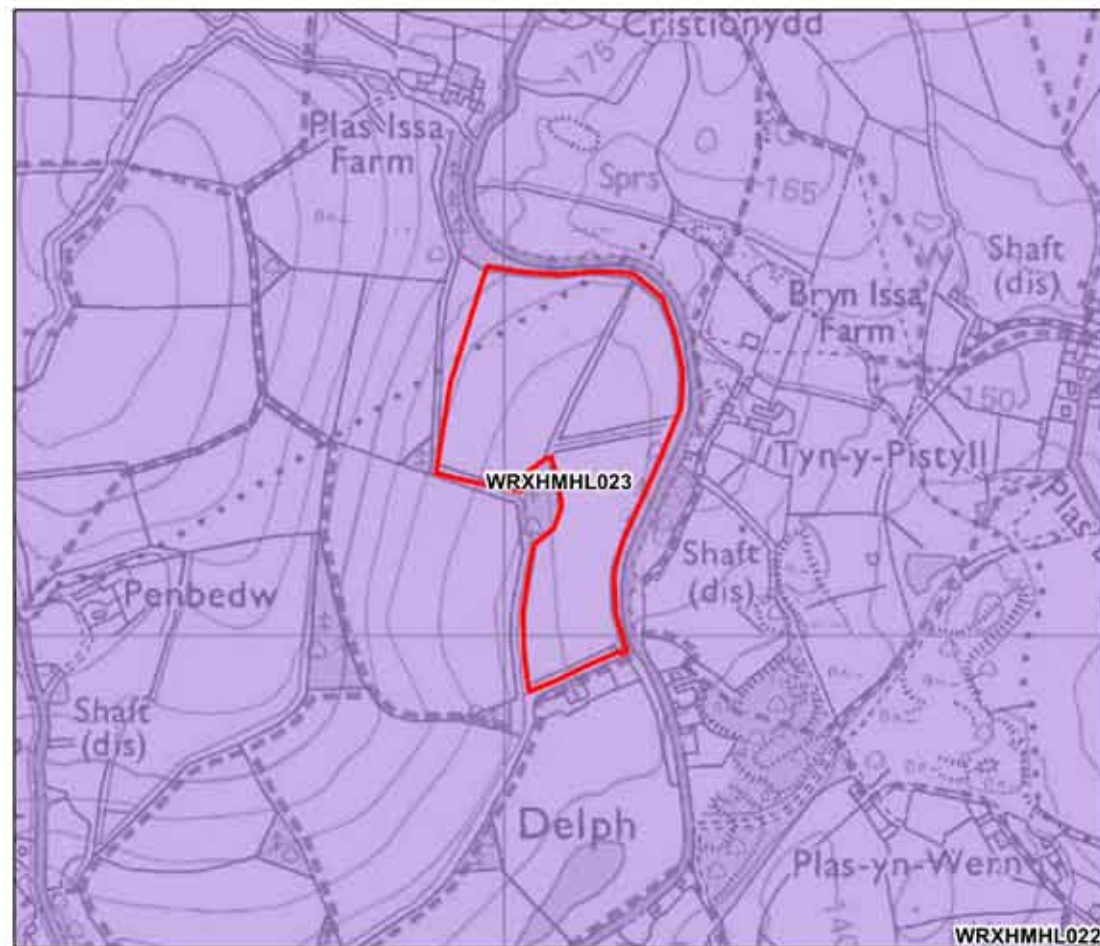
Geological Character	
	• ‘Underlain by sedimentary rocks – Coal Measures of Carboniferous age, mostly covered by glacial till; • Cefn Mawr is located on a ridge of yellow sandstone (Cefn Rock), which was quarried for local buildings; • Artificial landforms form large proportion of area –restored open cast mining spoil heaps, clay pits etc.’

Ecological Character	
	• ‘Mixed area with much valuable secondary grassland or scrub woodland on former industrial land; • Remnants of semi- natural vegetation including lowland pasture and broad leaved woodland linked to the small valley of the Tref- y-nant Brook; • Restored land in the Delph area is improved grassland of low value, but new hedges provide a valuable green network’.
Historical Character	
	• ‘Settlements are mainly of 19th or 20th century origin, linked to the exploitation of area’s minerals; • Sandstone quarries in Cefn Mawr provided stone for the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and many other buildings; • Network of disused industrial railway lines; • The chemical works are situated at the end of a former link to the Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union Canal which transported materials and products to and from the area; • The former Plas Bennion explosives factory is a 20th Century military site’.

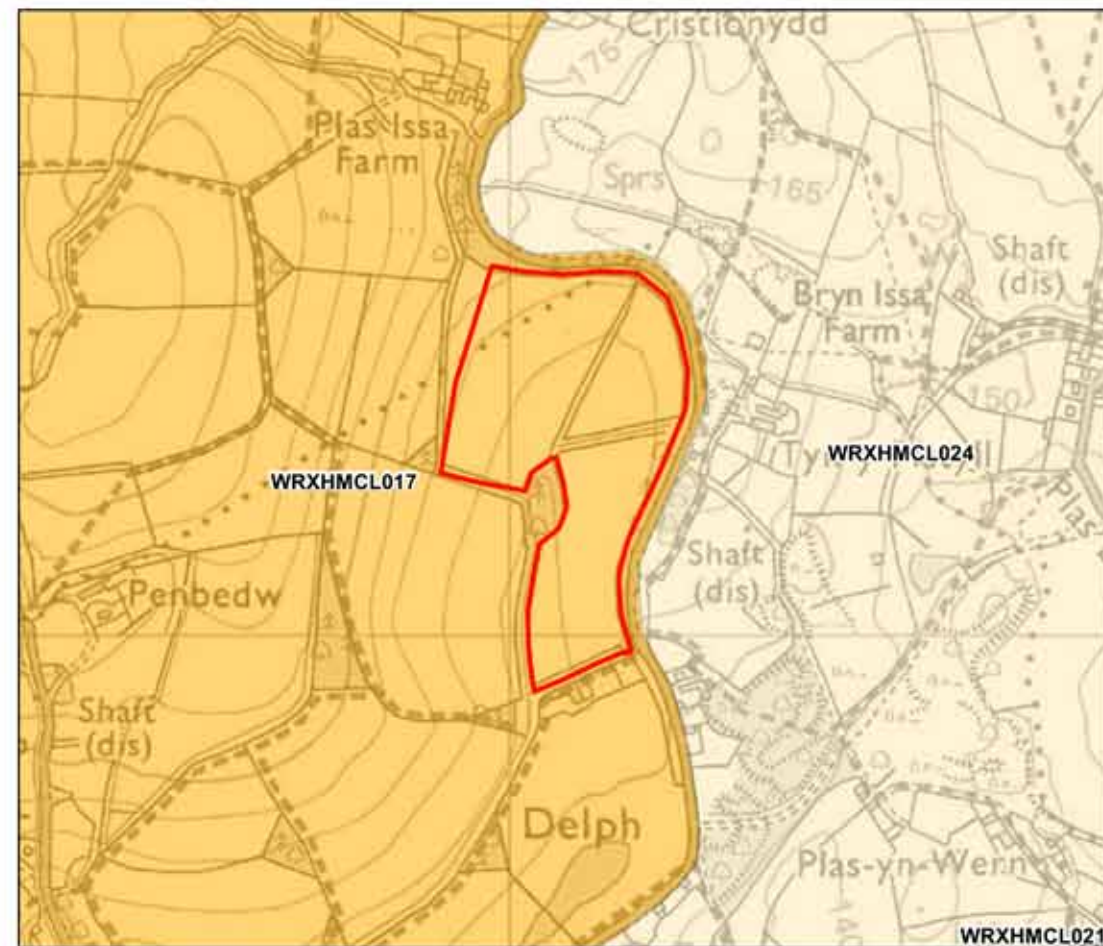
Cultural Character	
	• ‘The area is of great interest for its industrial heritage, developed through the enterprise of prominent individuals; • The commercial centre of Cefn Mawr is presently undergoing regeneration thorough a Townscape Heritage Initiative, and has recently been designated as a Conservation Area; • There is a significant proportion of Welsh speaking inhabitants’.

7.28	The Landscape Sensitivity of the area is identified as very sensitive ‘ the area is very vulnerable to development which does not take account of the very distinctive settlement patterns, industrial heritage, tourist traffic passing through the area, and prominent location overlooking the Dee Valley’.
7.29	It is to be noted that although the Application Site itself is not within a Statutory or non statutory designation it is within close proximity to the Clwydian and Dee Valley AONB and Ardunel Tirlum Arbenning Special Landscape Area. At the time of writing this report the management plan for the joint AONB has not yet been produced and there is no further information regarding the Special Landscape Area other than within Local Policy which is referenced in the Landscape Policy Chapter.

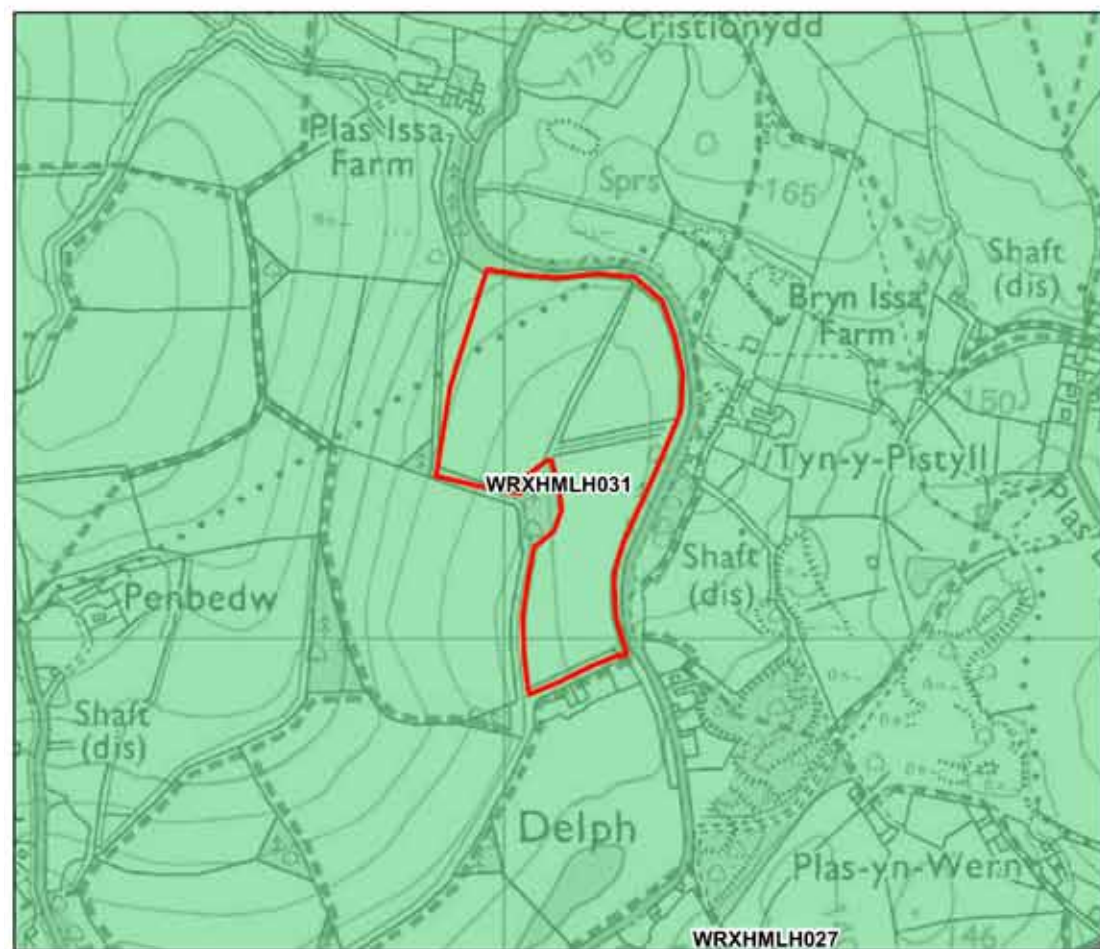




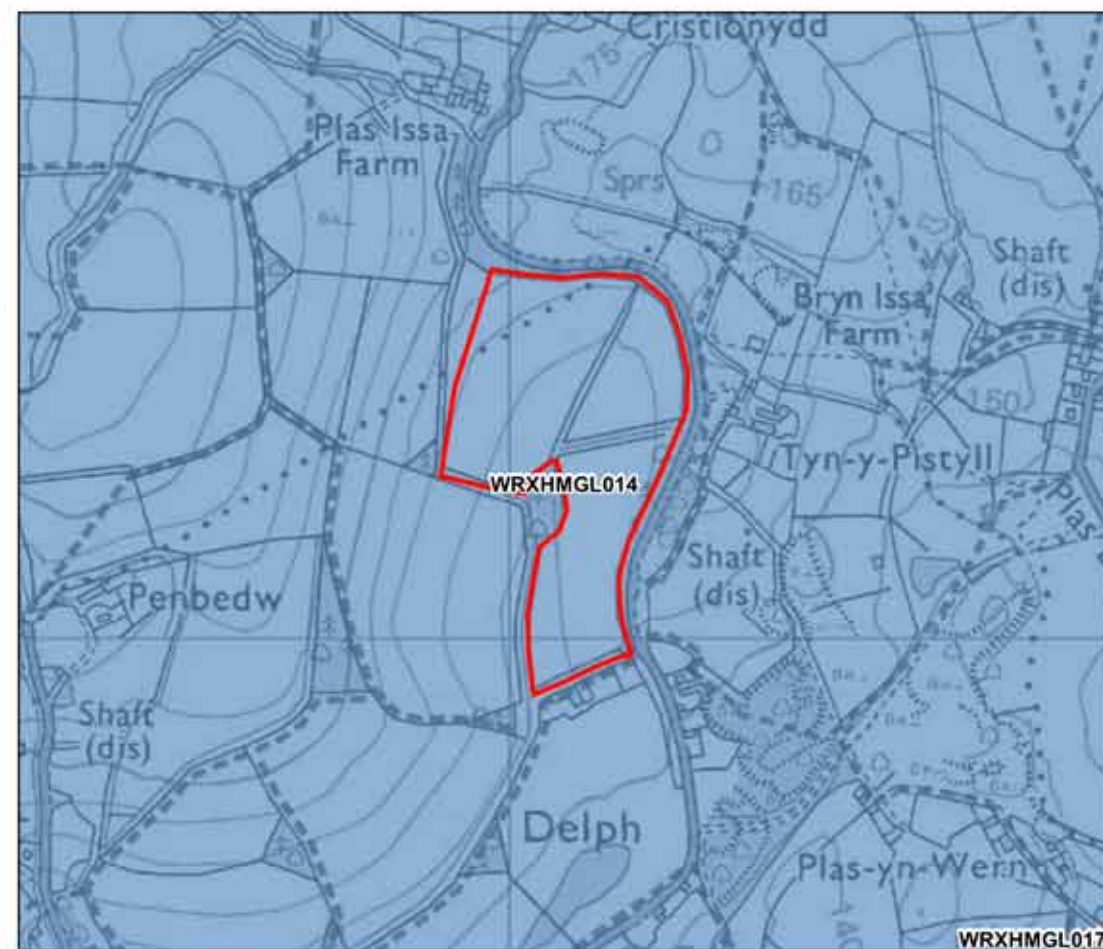
Historic Landscape



Cultural Landscape



Landscape Habitats



Geological Landscape

KEY

Site Boundary

Historic Landscape Aspect Areas

Garden (WRXHMHL023)

Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas

Historic industrial areas (WRXHMCL024)

Mynydd Rhiwabon Esclusham (lower slopes) (WRXHMCL017)

Landscape Habitat Aspect Areas

Talwrn Grassland (WRXHMLH031)

Geological Landscape Aspect Areas

Delph (WRXHMGL014)

Figure 7: Landmap Aspect Areas

Scale: 1:10,000 @ A3

Author’s Assessment of the Existing Local Landscape Character up to 2km from the Site		
7.30	The author’s own assessment considers the character of the proposed site and its immediate surroundings and reviews the sensitivity and capacity of the local landscape to accommodate a development of the type and scale proposed. The following criteria will be used:	
Landscape Scale		
7.31	The local landscape is of a medium scale due to undulating topography, generally small to medium-scale field sizes and generally medium range views as result of existing topography and vegetation. Some longer views are available from elevated locations to the north and south along the upper valley slopes of the valley.	7.37 The Proposed Development is low lying with a maximum height above ground level of 3m and the majority of the development (i.e. the solar panels) being around 2.2m tall. As a result it would generally be below the height of the surrounding hedgerows and would not alter the topography of the local area or its sense of enclosure.
Landscape Pattern and Complexity		
7.32	The urban areas of Acrefair and Cefn Mawr provide a smaller scale landscape as views are restricted by built development. To the north of Penycae the landscape scale increases on the higher ground and it becomes more open.	7.38 In terms of landscape pattern and complexity the landscape surrounding the Application Site can be considered in two distinct areas.
7.33	The Proposed Development is considered to be of medium scale and therefore would be in keeping with the surrounding landscape.	7.39 To the north-west and east the settlements of Rhosllanerchaugo and Ruabon are major urban area associated complex transport and utility infrastructure which is also reflected to the south with the presence of Acrefair, Pas Madoc and Cefn Mawr which are situated along the lower valley slopes and valley floor .
Landform and Enclosure		
7.34	The terrain of the site is gently sloping from Delph Road which is approximately 162 m above ordnance datum (AOD) to the western edge of the site which at its highest point is 170 m AOD before falling to the south western corner to 163 m AOD. The landform then rises further upward (to the west), towards Pen-y-bryn which is 223 m AOD. To the south the landform gradually rises from 163 m AOD in the south west corner to Plas Issa Farm which is 175 m AOD reaching approximately 192 m AOD around the settlement of Pen y Cae. From the north the site slopes downward from approximately 171 m AOD in the northwest corner of the site to 154 m AOD in the south east corner of the site. The centre of the site is approximately 155 m AOD, and rises to the east and west on either side creating a concave form on either side.	7.40 In contrast to the north, south and west the landscape is gently undulating, predominantly pastoral farmland with typically small to medium-sized fields of variable shapes. This is a less complex landscape, albeit one that still shows clear evidence of human influence. The Application Site occupies a position in the transitional area between these two levels of complexity.
7.35	The landscape beyond this is more complex rising upward to the west to 235 AOD around Pen-y-bryn and the peak of Ruabon Mountain at 502 m AOD and to the north to approximately 200 m AOD. To the east the topography falls to approximately 115 m AOD around the settlement of Ruabon. To the south the landform falls to around 65m AOD, along the valley floor before rising to approximately 300m AOD around Warren Wood.	7.41 The proposed solar farm is of simple, regular form and would therefore fit within the landscape without altering the landscape pattern.
Settlement Pattern		
7.36	The sense of enclosure is generally quite strong due to the presence of hedges on field boundaries and along narrow lanes. The undulating	7.42 The settlement pattern falls into two types – larger urban areas such as, Rhosllanerchrugo, Ruabon and Cefn Mawr together with associated infrastructure and transport links, and small villages such as Oenycae, Trefechan and Pen-y-bryn. There are also isolated properties, often farmsteads, such as Palsu Chaf, Plasa Issa and Talponciau Farm.
Existing Built Infrastructure and Human Influence		
		7.43 The settlement pattern would not be affected by the Proposed Development.
Summary		
		7.44 The presence of Acrefair, Plas Madoc and Cefn Mawer to the south of the Application Site shows that there is already a very strong human influence in the local landscape. The large scale buildings of industrial estates within these areas feature strongly in views to the south from
Skylines		
		7.45 Pen-y-bryn, and from higher ground to the west and north. The mainline railway line to the east running in a north to south direction and the high voltage electricity transmission lines and associated pylons throughout the landscape and major infrastructure routes are further examples of built infrastructure.
		7.46 The proposed solar farm would be another form of low level built infrastructure but being less visible than many other forms of infrastructure in the area would be in keeping with this.
Inter-visibility		
		7.47 The Proposed Development would not form a dominant feature on the skyline as it will generally be screened by existing vegetation and landform.
		7.48 There is a degree of inter visibility between the Application Site and the wider landscape in particular from elevated parts of the landscape to the north, south and west. Therefore it is acknowledged there is some inter visibility between the Proposed Development and the wider landscape.
		7.49 However a combination of intervening landform, vegetation, prevailing weather conditions and built form restrict many views.
Tranquillity		
		7.50 The locality is a rural landscape located adjacent to a medium scale conurbation with industry and transport links. Tranquillity is affected by traffic on the network of major and minor roads, and by the adjacent urban infrastructure in close proximity to the Application Site. The existing level of tranquillity would not materially change with the Proposed Development in place.
		7.51 The published landscape character assessments (LANDMAP) and the author’s own assessment are broadly similar for the site and its environs. However it should be noted that the proximity of the Application Site to the urban edge of Acrefair means that the landscape immediately surrounding the site is under greater urban/human influence than perhaps the Aspect Areas as a whole, especially for the Northern Vale Lias Slopes Visual and Sensory Aspect Area.

7.52 The key features of the local landscape character can be summarised as:

- An agricultural landscape of small to medium-sized fields;
- Fields boundaries formed by generally un-managed hedgerows with some hedgerow trees, and in some places stronger lines of trees such as along Delph Road and the lower slopes of the valley to the south;
- Undulating topography and field boundary vegetation limits inter-visibility, but longer views are occasionally available from higher ground;
- Mix of narrow, lanes and larger main roads;
- Housing often visible on the edge of villages such as Penycae due to light-coloured render on walls; and
- Strong urban-edge influence arising from Acrefair, Ruabon and Cefn Mawr

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

7.53 The Application Site is not currently within any statutory or non-statutory landscape designations however it is within a locally designated Green Barrier and in close proximity to a SLA and AONB.

7.54 It is considered that the Application Site and its immediate environs are typical for the proposed SLA area as a whole due to the strong urban influence to the north-west, east and south.

7.55 The Visual and Sensory, Historical and Geological Landscape Aspect Areas that include the Application Site are all assigned values of moderate. Those for Landscape Habitat and Cultural Landscape are assigned high values, but for both of these the overall Aspect Areas are more rural and less influenced by the urban edge than the area immediately surrounding the Proposed Development. It is therefore considered that the overall value of the Application Site and its immediate surroundings is medium.

7.56 Wrexham Borough Council have not undertaken any specific research into the sensitivity of the area in relation to wind or ground mounted solar energy at the time of writing this report and rely upon the national planning policy in Planning Policy Wales and guidance contained in Welsh Government Technical Advice Note 8 – Planning for Renewable Energy which we have referred to in our Planning Policy Chapter.

7.57 The Proposed Development is of low profile and fits within the existing landscape framework of the Application Site and its surroundings. There is some inter visibility across the local landscape from elevated positions, however the edge of Acrefair and the larger settlements to the south and east restricts these impacts. As well as the high level of human influence already present and urban infrastructure present throughout the

landscape. It is therefore considered that the local landscape character has a medium susceptibility to the Proposed Development and the overall sensitivity to such development is assessed as medium.

7.58 It is considered that the construction and operation of the proposed 10.67 hectare solar farm would bring about a negligible magnitude of change on the landscape character of the wider area. With medium sensitivity this would give rise to a negligible adverse effect on the landscape character of the local area.

7.59 In terms of the Application Site itself, it is assessed that the Proposed Development would give rise to a high magnitude of change as the agricultural grassland undergoes temporary (albeit long-term) conversion to renewable energy infrastructure superimposed onto ongoing sheep grazing on the site. With medium sensitivity this would give rise to major adverse effect on the site itself, however this would have limited visibility outside of the immediate environs of the site and beyond 2 km.

8.0 EFFECT UPON VISUAL AMENITY

Visual Receptors and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

8.1 The screened Zone of Theoretical Visibility and Viewpoint Location Plan (Figure 8) identifies the potential locations from which the development may be visible. The ZTV has been produced using ArcGIS 10.1 and generated using Landform Panorama 50m Digital Terrain Modelling (DTM) data. Existing built development and larger blocks of woodland have also been modelled (at 8m and 15m tall respectively) to take account of the screening effect that these would provide. However the screening effect provided by small blocks of woodland, screen belts and hedgerows/ hedgerow trees have not be taken into account, and consequently the actual extent of the area from which the proposals are visible is likely to be much smaller.

Visual Amenity Derived from Proposals

8.2 The Proposed Development would use a limited palette of materials and colours that would be typically self finishing. However the visibility of the Proposed Development will very much vary in reality depending on weather conditions but generally would not be considered to be incongruous as the solar panel are designed to absorb the light rather than reflect it.

Baseline Visual Receptors

8.3 Following site investigation, it is apparent that the greatest potential effect on visual amenity would be within the immediate surroundings of the Application Site. More distant views of the site would be limited through a combination of the screening and filtering effect of the un-modelled intervening vegetation. Any more distant views of the Proposed Development would be assimilated into the wider landscape.

Residential Properties

8.4 It is anticipated that the layering effect of existing and proposed vegetation together with intervening topography would effectively restrict views from those residential properties within close proximity i.e. 500 metres of the Application Site boundary. Isolated farmsteads on the upper valley slopes although seen from the Application Site have limited/ restricted views of the Application Site itself due to the existing intervening vegetation and landform surrounding the site.

Public Highways

8.5 Views from public highways within 2 km of the Application Site boundary, including the A5, A539 and A483 would be limited. Many views would be restricted through a combination of topography view and the presence of hedgerows, and trees close to the edge of the carriageway and built infrastructure. Where views are possible from the minor roads in close

proximity to the site such as Delph Road and the unnamed lane leading to Pen-y-bryn these are typically from breaks in the enclosing vegetation such as field entrances. The views of the Proposed Development at such points though potentially framed, would nevertheless be experienced as transitory ones and at speed. Many of these views are illustrative of specific views the visual receptor would experience travelling along the lanes route rather than being representative of the overall view visual receptors would experience travelling along these routes.

Public Rights of Way (PRoWs) and Open Access Land

- 8.6 The Application Site is surrounded by a network of public rights of way. Most of the public rights of way respond to the existing field boundaries and therefore many of the views of the Proposed Development would be restricted through the layering effect of existing vegetation, occassionally woodland and/or the sloping topography. The convex nature of many of the valleys sides act to greatly restrict views to the upper slopes.
- 8.7 Where views occur from the public right of way network around the Application Site, including the public right of way that passes to the south of the site, the proposed solar farm would not be viewed in its entirety but as a discrete element within the retained fabric of existing field boundaries.
- 8.8 There would also be some distant views of the Proposed Development from some parts of the PRoW on the higher ground to the north and south of the Application Site. The proposed solar farm would not be viewed in its entirety but only as discrete elements within the retained fabric of existing field boundaries. The proposals would also typically visible as part of a wider more expansive view in which the proposals would be a small element in a landscape composed of many other elements including urban areas within the valley floors.
- 8.9 The proposed solar farm would form only a small proportion of the view in long ranging views in a landscape already containing built form. The predominantly rural landscape nature of such views would continue to prevail with the Proposed Development in place.

Views from the AONB and Special Landscape Area

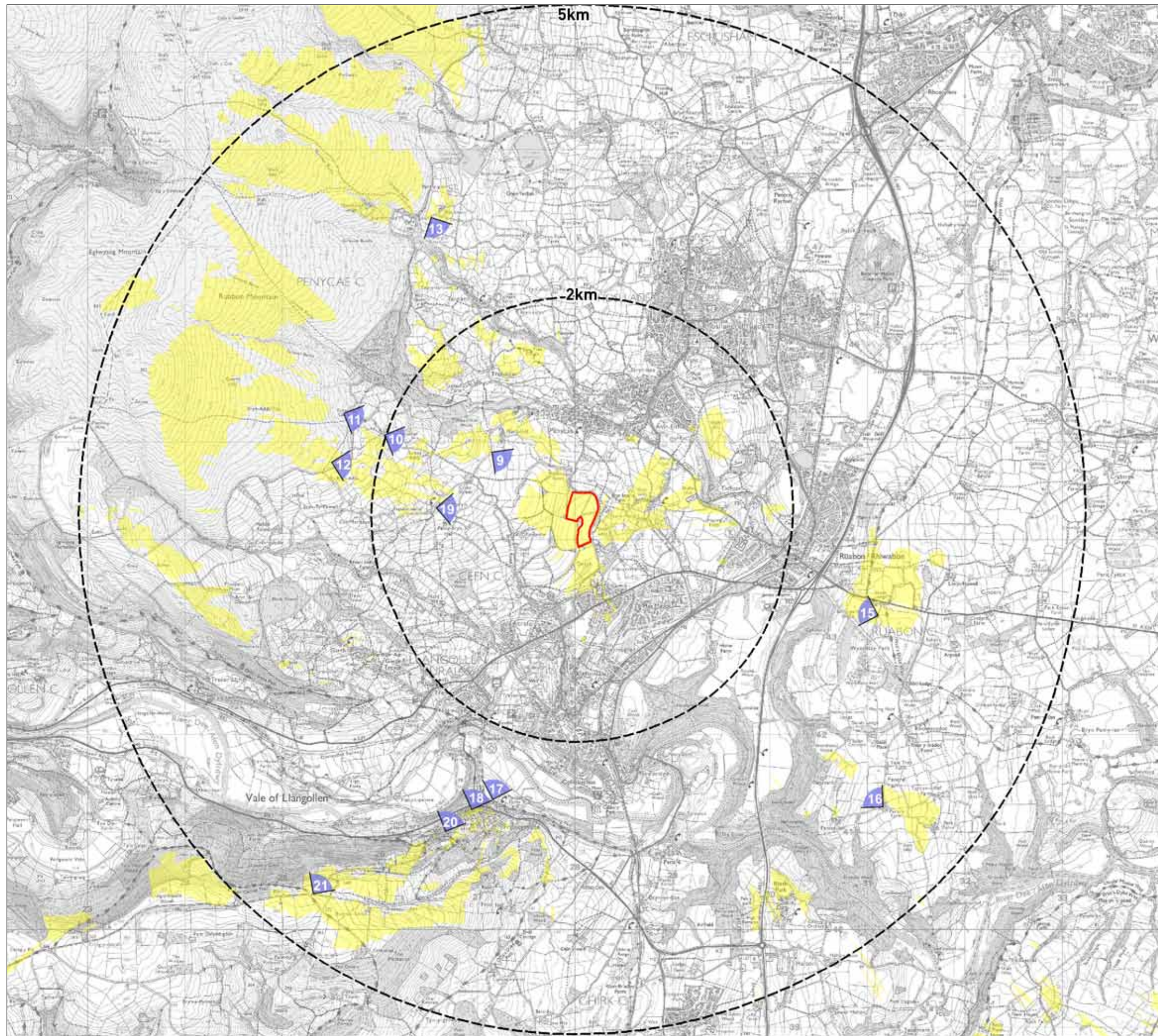
- 8.10 At its closest point the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB lies approximately 1.5 km to the west of the Application Site. Despite the close proximity of the AONB views looking towards the site are predominately obscured by existing topography, built form and vegetation in the form of hedgerows and woodland blocks which obscure views onto the site. Where views are apparent these are from elevated positions within the AONB, and tend to be medium to long distance views in which the Proposed Development will form only a small proportion of the overall view.

Selection of Representative Viewpoints

- 8.11 The screened ZTV for the Proposed Developmentwas used to inform the selection of representative viewpoints for the visual assessment. The selected viewpoints (and photomontage locations) were agreed by email with the Case Officer at Wrexham Borough Council in December 2014. Currently there is not a Landscape Officer within the Local Planning Authority. In addition it was requested by Wrexham Borough Council that viewpoints were considered from the Pontcysyllte and Canal World Heritage site.
- 8.12 The selected viewpoints are not intended to cover every possible view, but rather are representative of a range of receptor types e.g. residents, horse riders, walkers, cyclists and road users from various directions and distances from the site boundary.
- 8.13 A visual assessment from the representative viewpoints was carried out in December 2014 to determine how the Proposed Development might influence the visual amenity for these typical receptors. The assessment was carried out as part of the site survey, with the photographic assessment recording the character of the view and the existing visibility of the site. The viewpoint photographs and detailed visual assessment are provided in Section 8.
- 8.14 The field survey was undertaken during the winter months when deciduous vegetation was absent from the surrounding vegetation. It is therefore possible that the visibility of the site may be reduced during the summer months when such deciduous vegetation is in leaf due to the density and thickness of the majority of the screening vegetation, combined with the fact that for many views the screening vegetation occurs in multiple layers (e.g. views are screened by more than one field boundary hedge).

Visual Assessment (Construction Phase)

- 8.15 The construction phase for the Proposed Development would be short (approx. 11 -12 weeks). Levels of activity on the site would increase from those associated with the current agricultural activities, but these would generally only be visible to receptors in the immediate vicinity of the site, predominantly people using Delph Road and Talponciau Farm.
- 8.16 For occupants of Talponicau Farm the value of the view is medium (as it is a pleasant rural view but with existing aspects of human influence), but the susceptibility to changes of the type proposed is medium to low (as views would be experienced from the farms outbuildings). Their overall sensitivity is therefore assessed as low. The magnitude of change is assessed as medium for the duration of the construction phase, resulting in a moderate to minor adverse effect.



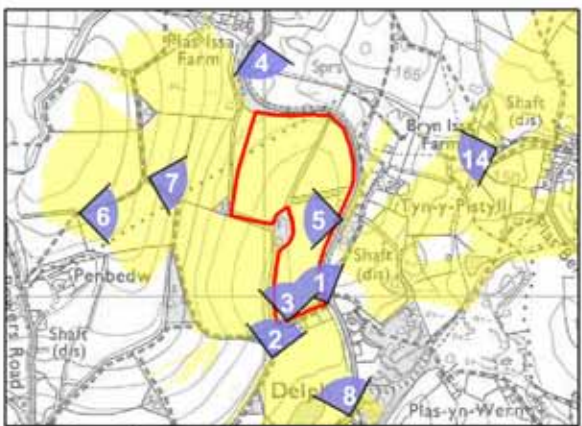
KEY

- Site Boundary
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility - 3m
- 13 Viewpoint Location

Screened ZTV Production Information -

- DTM data used in calculations is OS Terrain 5 that has been combined with OS Vectormap data for woodland and buildings to create a Digital Surface Model (DSM).
- Indicative Woodland and Building heights are modelled at 15m and 8m respectively.
- Viewer height set at 1.7m
- Calculations include earth curvature and light refraction

N.B. This Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) image illustrates the theoretical extent of where the development will be visible from, assuming 100% visibility, and includes the screening effect from vegetation and buildings, based on the assumptions stated above.



Inset Map (1:20,000)

Figure 8: ZTV & Viewpoint Location Plan

Scale: 1:40,000 @ A3

- 8.17 For people using the PRoW to the south and west of the site, the value of the view is medium (as it is a pleasant rural view but with strong existing aspects of human influence), the susceptibility to changes of the type proposed is high with an overall sensitivity being assessed as high. The magnitude of change is assessed as high for the duration of the construction phase, resulting in a Major to moderate adverse effect.
- 8.18 For receptors passing the site to the east along Delph Road, the value of the view is medium (as it is a pleasant but restricted rural view but with existing aspects of human influence), the susceptibility to changes of the type proposed is medium (as they are travelling at speed and experiencing transitional views only). The magnitude of change is assessed as medium, resulting in a moderate adverse effect.

Visual Assessment (Operational Phase)

- 8.19 The detailed assessment of the likely effects on visual amenity is provided with the representative viewpoint photographs overleaf. A summary of the effects is provided (right):

Viewpoint	Description	Sensitivity	Magnitude of change	Visual effect
VP3	View from CEF/X-4 looking east towards Delph Road	High	Medium	Moderate adverse reducing to minor adverse
VP4	View from Delph Road looking south to Application Site	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
VP5	View from Delph Road passing the site to the west	Medium	High	Major adverse reducing to minor adverse
VP6	View from PRoW CEF/X-8 to the west of Application Site from gap in existing vegetation	High	High reducing to medium	Major adverse reducing to moderate adverse
VP7	View from PRoW CEF/X-8 to the west of Application Site from farm access gate	High	High reducing to medium	Major adverse reducing to moderate adverse
VP8	View from Delph Road to the south of the Application Site	Medium	Low	Minor adverse to negligible
VP9	View from unnamed lane leading to Pen-y-Bryn	Medium	Low	Minor adverse to negligible
VP10	View from Tyddyn U Chaf Farm	High	Negligible	According to the assessment criteria there will be a minor adverse effect, however in reality there will be no change with the Proposed Development in place.
VP11	View from Bryn Adda Falt PEN/46	High	Negligible	According to the assessment criteria there will be a minor adverse effect, however in reality there will be no change with the Proposed Development in place.
VP12	View from Bryn Adda Falt PEN/45	High	Negligible	According to the assessment criteria there will be a minor adverse effect, however in reality there will be no change with the Proposed Development in place.
VP13	View from unnamed lane leading to Hall Lane from Gas Reservoir	High	Negligible	According to the assessment criteria there will be a minor adverse effect, however in reality there will be no change with the Proposed Development in place.
VP14	View from PRoW PEN/53	High	Negligible	According to the assessment criteria there will be a minor adverse effect, however in reality there will be no change with the Proposed Development in place.
VP15	View from entrance drive to Wynnstay Park	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
VP16	View from lane leading to Pentre opposite Pentre Farm	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
VP17	View from PRoW adjacent to Llangollen Canal	High	Negligible	According to the assessment criteria there will be a minor adverse effect, however in reality there will be no change with the Proposed Development in place.
VP18	View from unnamed lane leading to Froncycyllte	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
VP19	View from unnamed lane from Pen-y-Bryn to Penycae	Medium	Low	Minor adverse to negligible
VP20	View from lower Ochyr Yr	Medium	Negligible	Negligible
VP21	View from upper Ochyr Yr	Medium	Negligible	Negligible

Distant Views (2km+ from the Application Site)

8.20 There are ten representative viewpoints located more than 2km from the Application Site – VPs 10,11 12, 13, 15,16,17,18,20, and 21. Neither of these would undergo any effect on visual amenity as a result of the proposed development.

Medium Range Views (500m to 2km from the Application Site)

8.21 There are two medium range representative viewpoint locations VP’s 9 and 19. VP 9 would a minor adverse effect in Year 1 reducing to negligible as a result of the proposed development on visual amenity. VP 19 would not undergo any effect on visual amenity as a result of the Proposed Development.

Short Range Views (less than 500m from the Application Site)

8.22 Of the nine short-range representative viewpoints:

- VP1 would undergo major to moderate adverse effects;
- VP2 would undergo negligible effects in Year 1 and 5;
- VP3 would undergo moderate to minor adverse effects;
- VP 4 would undergo negligible effects;
- VP 5 would undergo major adverse to moderate effects;
- VP 6 would undergo major to moderate adverse effects;
- VP 7 would undergo major to moderate adverse effects;
- VP 8 would undergo minor adverse to negligible effects;
- VP 14 would undergo negligible/ no effects to the view.

Night-time Visual Effects

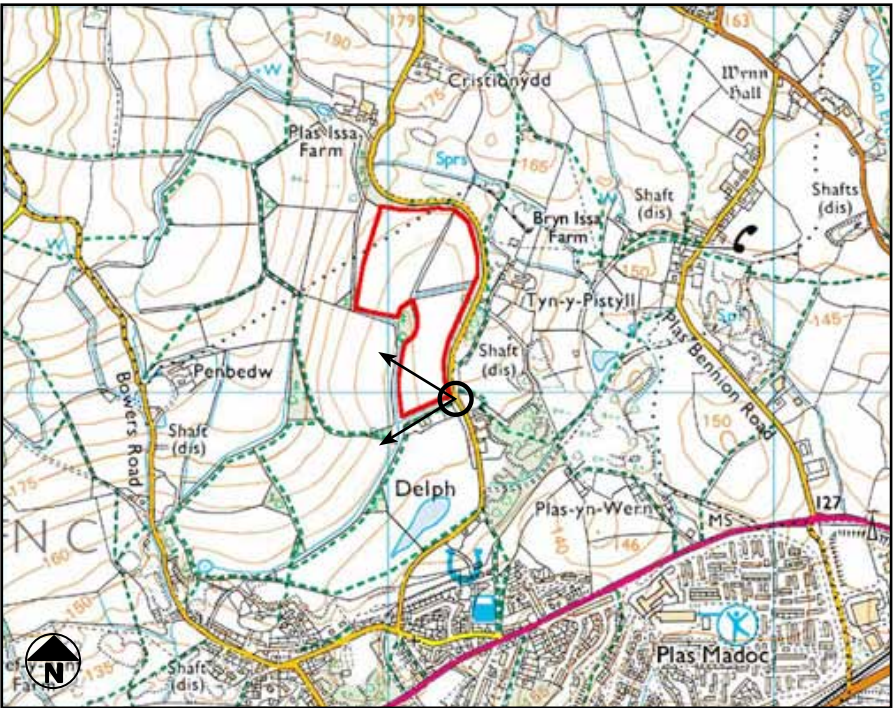
8.23 There would be no lighting installed as part of the proposed development. As a result there would be no night-time effects on visual amenity.

Summary

8.24 Although the site is (partially) visible from a number of locations in the local area, only users of the public footpath which passes along the southern boundary of the site and PRow to the west would experience adverse effects of greater than moderate scale, with the remaining other representative receptors undergoing effects of minor to negligible scale.



VIEWPOINT 1
View from PRoW CEF/X-4 to south of site



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 10:10
OS grid reference - 328166, 343982
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 155m
Distance from site - Edge of site

Description of Baseline View

- 8.1 The existing view shows the access track to Talponciau Farm and Public Right of Way (PRoW) CEF/ X-4 and is representative of visual receptors travelling along Delph Road and the PRoW. The foreground of the view is characterized by the outbuildings and within the curtilage of the Talponciau Farm complex. To the north the proposed Application Site would be directly visible, beyond which in the middle distance a belt of birch trees are visible. The landform gradually ascends towards the horizon. The landscape contains small to medium scale pastoral fields and occasional blocks of woodland. To the west beyond the Talponciau Farm complex a distinct belt of birch are visible together with Ruabon Mountain and the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB.
- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape designations.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 The view is taken from a PRoW. The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. Combined with a medium value view and a high susceptibility, the overall sensitivity of the viewpoint is assessed as high.
- 8.4 For road users the susceptibility to changes of the type proposed is medium as the view is oblique and restricted to views through field gateway. For

users of the PRoW, susceptibility to changes of the type proposed is high as once through the gate views of the Proposed Development would be directly visible from the section of PRoW passing the southern boundary of the Application Site.

- 8.5 The overall sensitivity is therefore medium for road users and high for users of the PRoW.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.6 Part of the Proposed Development would be visible through the gateway in the foreground, in the form of security fencing and solar panels. Therefore the magnitude of change in Year 1 is assessed as high, for users of the PRoW, which would reduce by Year 5 to medium with the establishment of the proposed new hedgerow in place and its successful establishment.
- 8.7 For road users the magnitude of change is assessed as medium in Year 1 reducing to low by Year 5 with the establishment of the proposed mitigation hedgerow planting.

Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.8 During the operational phase, the scale of effect would be minor adverse for road users and major adverse for users of the PRoW. By Year 5 the scale of effect would be negligible for road users, and moderate adverse for users of the PRoW.



Photomontage View - Year 1

For correct perspective viewing, this image must be viewed at a distance of 30cm with one eye ,whilst curved through 75°. Document dimensions (420mm x 297mm)



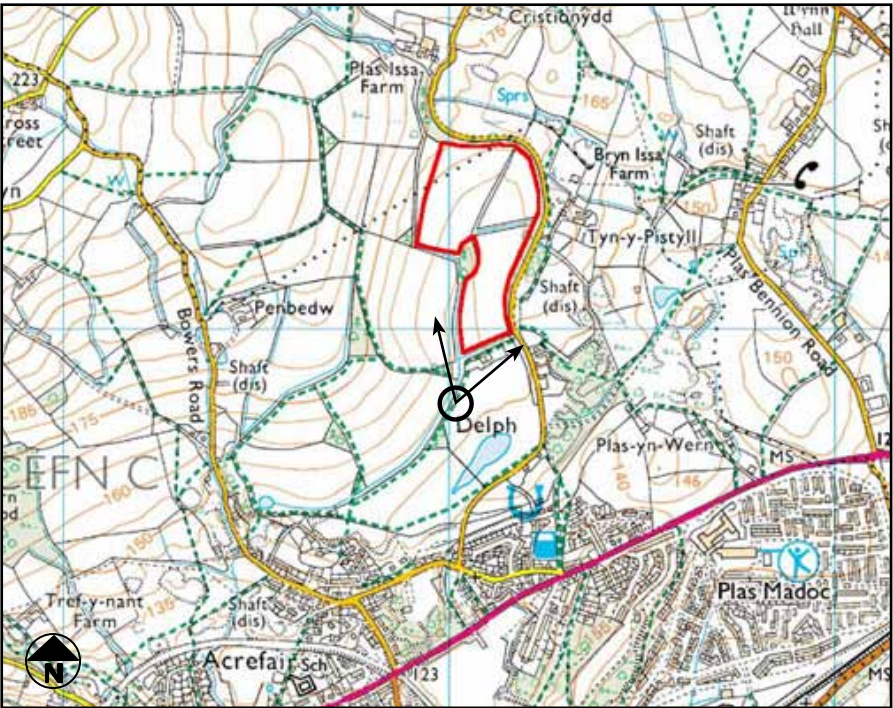
Photomontage View - Year 5

Camera make and model: Canon EOS 5D with a 50mm lens.
Date & time of photography : 06/10/2014 @ 10:10
OS reference : 328166, 343982
Viewpoint height : 155
Viewing distance : 30cm
Angle of view : 75°



VIEWPOINT 2

View from PRoW CEF X/5 to south west of site



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 10:14
OS grid reference - 328019, 343837
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 155m
Distance from site - 90m

8.1 The existing view shows Public Right of Way (PRoW) CEF/ X-4 and is representative of views visual receptors would experience travelling along the PRoW. Views are restricted to the wider landscape by scrubby vegetation either side of the PRoW and woodland bordering the edge of the site. The value of the view is assessed as low as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape designations; furthermore views of the Application Site are restricted by intervening vegetation.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

8.2 The view is taken from a public right of way (PRoW). The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. With a low value and a high susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the view is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

8.3 The Proposed Development would not be visible from this viewpoint by the screening effect of intervening vegetation. Consequently the magnitude of change in Year 1 and 5 would be negligible.

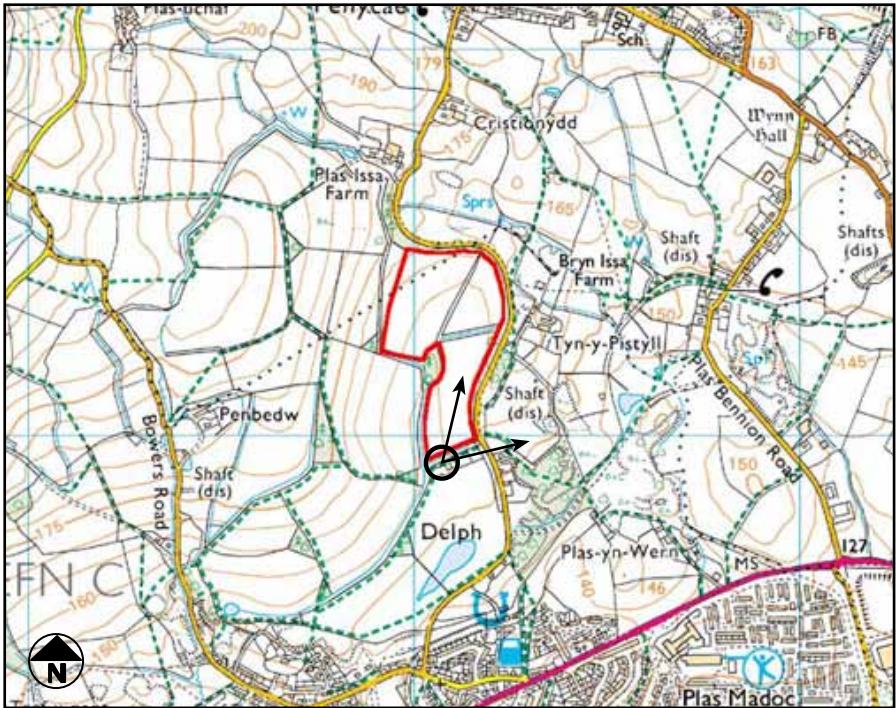
Scale of Visual Effect

8.4 With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there would be a minor adverse effect according to the assessment criteria. In effect there would be no change on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 and Year 5.



VIEWPOINT 3

View from PRoW CEF/X-4 to rear of Talponciau Farm complex



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 10:13
OS grid reference - 328059, 343935
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 154m
Distance from site - Edge of site

- 8.1 The existing view shows PRoW CEF/ X-4 looking east towards Delph Road. It is representative of views visual receptors would experience travelling along the PRoW. The Application Site is partially visible through the existing vegetation along the edge of the PRoW where the existing vegetation is at a reduced height or missing. During the summer months with the existing vegetation in leaf views maybe restricted onto the development site further with fragmented and filtered views only onto the site. To the south views are obscured within the Talponciau Farm complex.
- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as low as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape designations and the view is restricted.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 The view is taken from a PRoW. The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. With a low value view and a high susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the viewpoint is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 The Proposed Development and the southern fields solar panels and security fencing will be partially seen in Year 1 through the existing vegetation along the PRoW, particularly in the winter months when the

existing vegetation is not in leaf. Therefore the magnitude of change is assessed as medium in Year 1 reducing to negligible by Year 5 with the proposed infill planting in place and the expectation that the existing vegetation would have continued to grow and become denser.

Scale of Visual Effect

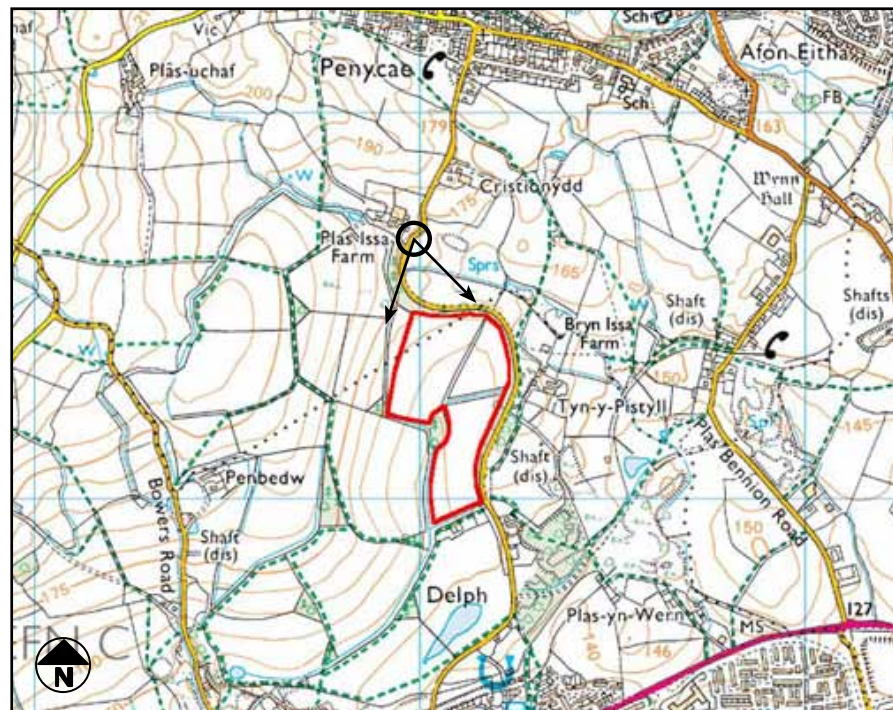
- 8.5 With a high sensitivity and a medium magnitude of change there will be a moderate adverse effect in Year 1, reducing to minor adverse by Year 5.

Approximate extent of Proposed Solar Park
(not visible due to intervening vegetation)

Delph Road

Plas Issa
Farm entrance

View from Delph Road looking south



26 L.0321 LAND TO THE WEST OF DELPH ROAD | APPRAISAL OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

- 8.1 The existing view looks southward along Delph Road towards the Application Site from the north of Plas Issa Farm entrance and is representative of views experienced by the visual receptor heading towards the Application Site. Views are restricted towards the Application site by restricted views along the alignment of Delph Road and the existing woodland on either side forming an oblique view.

- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape designations.

8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value and medium susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the visual receptors is assessed as medium.

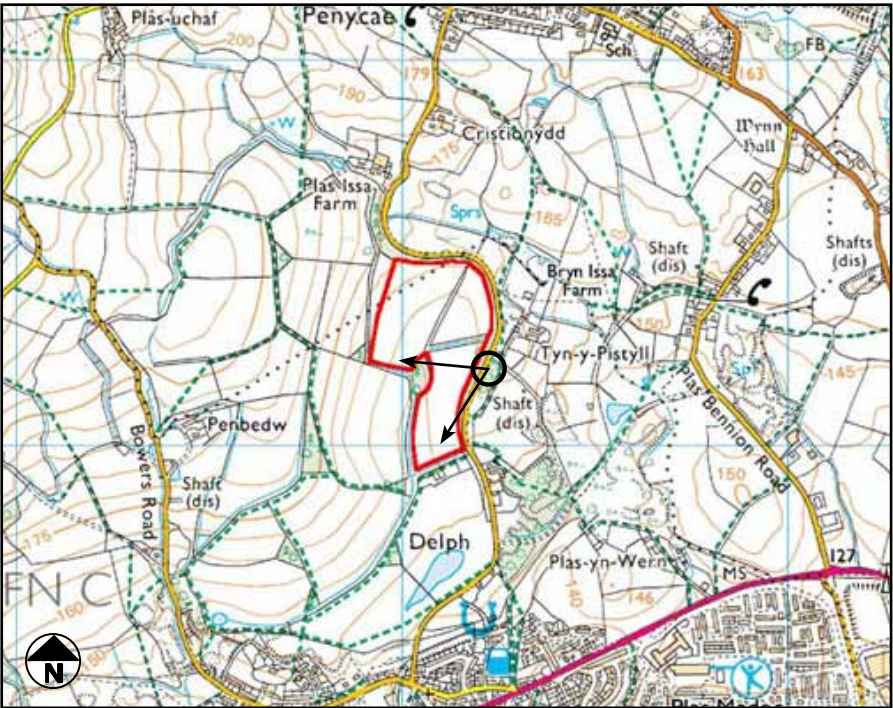
8.4 The application site is hidden from view by intervening vegetation. Consequently the magnitude of change brought about by the proposed development at both year 1 and 5 would be negligible

8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there will be a negligible effect on the view with the proposed development in place.



VIEWPOINT 5A

View from Delph Road looking west



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 10:38
OS grid reference - 328206, 344203
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 159m
Distance from site - Edge of site

- 8.1 The view is from Delph Road and is representative of views visual receptors are likely to experience as they pass the proposed development. The existing view shows an undulating pastoral landscape with fields defined by hedgerows, post and rail fencing and several blocks of woodland. The Application Site is directly visible in the foreground above the gate entrance with several pastoral fields rising towards the horizon.

- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape designations.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. With a medium value and medium susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the visual receptor are assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 The Proposed Development solar panels, security fence and associated infrastructure would be directly visible in the foreground and middle ground above the existing gate entrance along the edge of Delph Road in Year 1. Therefore the magnitude of change is assessed as high. There is the potential to mitigate some of the visual effect of the proposals by introducing new mitigation woodland planting, along Delph Road which

would reduce the initial visual effects of the Proposed Development by Year 5 to low.

Scale of Visual Effect

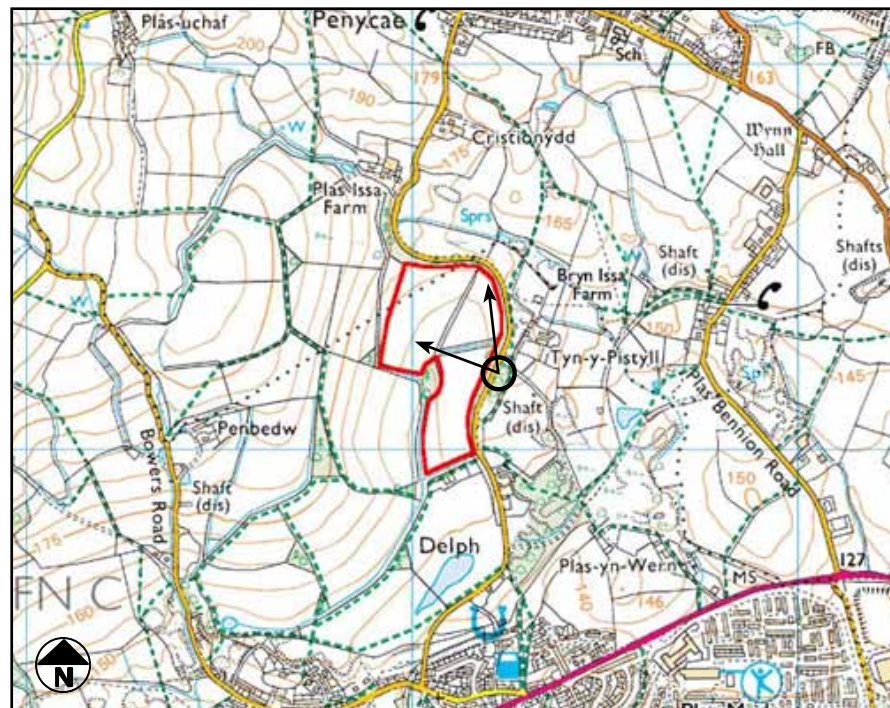
- 8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a high magnitude of change there will be a major adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 reducing to minor adverse by Year 5 with the proposed woodland planting along Delph Road in place and established.

Extent of Proposed Solar Park



VIEWPOINT 5B

View from Delph Road looking west

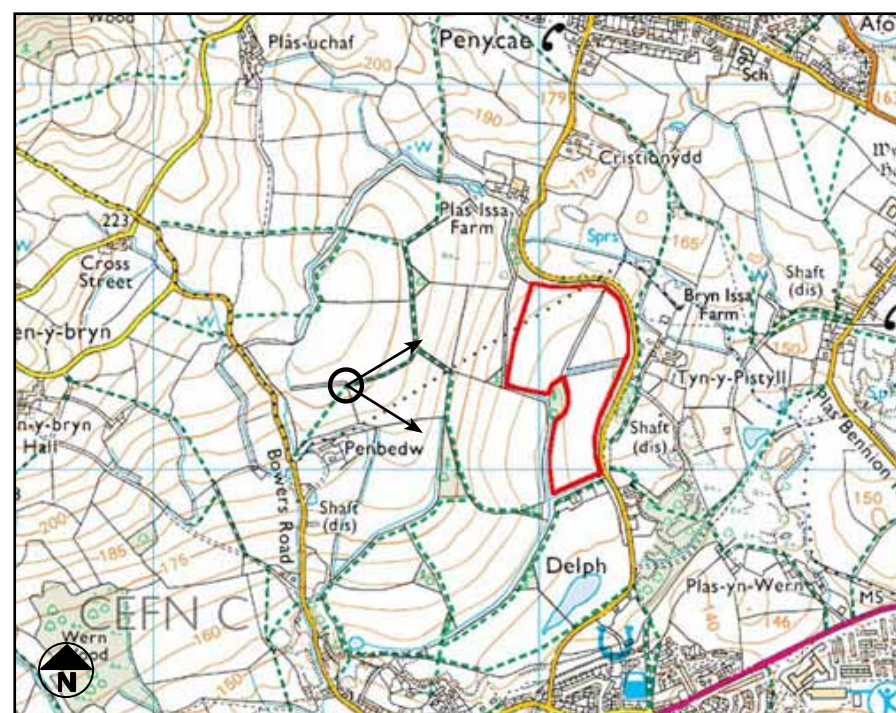


Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 10:38
OS grid reference - 328206, 344203
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 159m
Distance from site - Edge of site



VIEWPOINT 6

View from PRoW PEN/X-8



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
 Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 11:58
 OS grid reference - 327508, 344224
 Viewpoint height (AOD) - 201m
 Distance from site - 405m

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from PRoW CEF/X-8 to the west of the Application Site through a gap in the existing vegetation. It is representative of views experienced by visual receptors travelling along the PRoW in an easterly direction. Views show an undulating landscape of pastoral fields defined by hedgerows and occasional blocks of woodland. In the middle distance the Application Site would be in partially in view as it rises upwards towards Delph Road, which is heavily vegetated. Several residential properties can be seen to the south along Delph Road and in the distance to the east along Plas Bennion Road. The edge of Penycae can just be seen on the horizon to the north with its bright rendered buildings distinctive within the existing landscape.

- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape designation.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 The view is taken from a public right of way (PRoW). The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. With a medium value view and a high susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 The Proposed Development's solar panels, security fence and associated infrastructure would be directly visible in the foreground and middle ground as the Proposed Development ascends from the valley floor. Therefore in Year 1 the magnitude of change is assessed as high reducing to medium by Year 5.

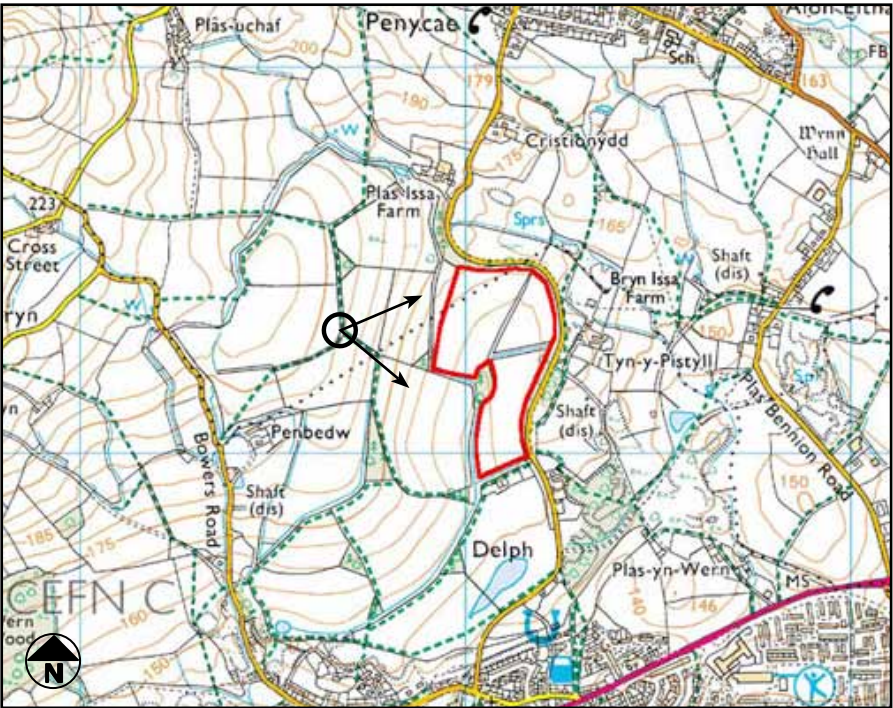
Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.5 With a high sensitivity and a high magnitude of change there will be a major adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1. This would reduce to moderate adverse by Year 5 with additional infill hedgerow planting within the existing hedgerows surrounding the site and all hedgerows maintained at 2.4 m in height.



VIEWPOINT 7

View from farm access junction of PEN X-8 and PEN X-9



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D Viewpoint height (AOD) - 193m
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 11:03 Distance from site - 235m
OS grid reference - 327692, 344318

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from the junction of PRoW CEF/ X-9 and PRoW CEF/X-8 to the west of the Application Site through a gap in the existing vegetation and is representative of views experienced by visual receptors travelling along the PRoW in a easterly direction. Views show an undulating landscape of pastoral fields edged with hedgerows and occasional blocks of woodland. In the middle distance the Application Site would be partially visible as it rises upwards towards Delph Road. Several residential properties are visible to the south along Delph Road and in the distance to the east along Plas Bennion Road. The edge of Penycae can just be seen on the horizon to the north with its bright rendered buildings distinctive within the existing landscape.
- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 The view is taken from a public right of way (PRoW). The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. With a medium value view and a high susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 The Proposed Development’s solar panels, security fence and associated infrastructure will be directly visible in the foreground and middle ground as the Proposed Development slopes upward from the valley floor with two of the three fields visible therefore in Year 1 the magnitude of change is assessed as high reducing to medium by Year 5 with proposed mitigation measures in place.

Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a high magnitude of change there will be a major adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 it is anticipated that this would reduce to moderate adverse by Year 5 with additional infill hedgerow planting within the existing hedgerows surrounding the site and all hedgerows maintained at 2.4 m in height.



Photomontage View - Year 1

For correct perspective viewing, this image must be viewed at a distance of 30cm with one eye ,whilst curved through 75°. Document dimensions (420mm x 297mm)



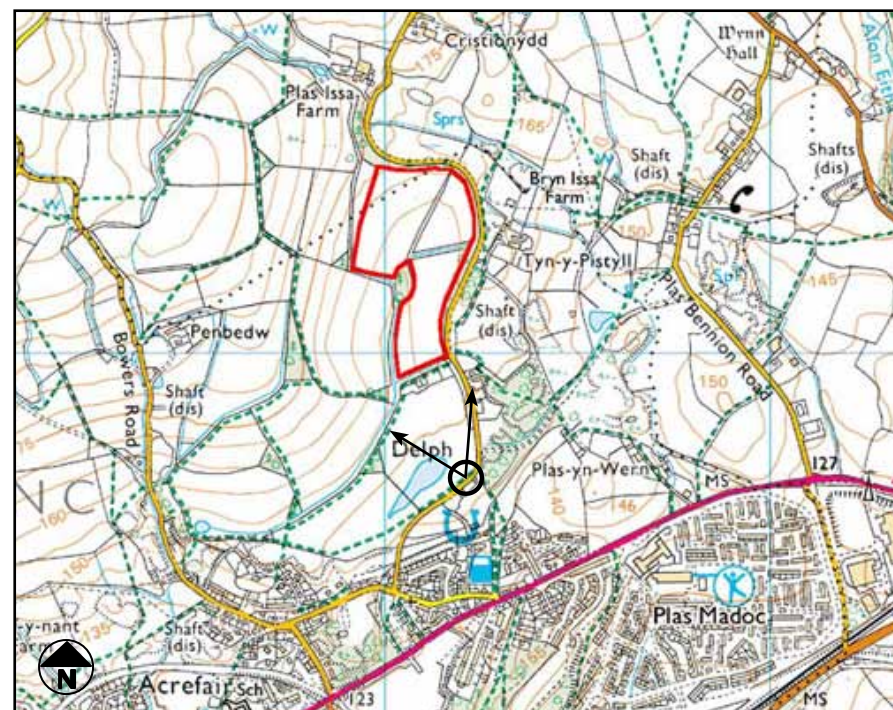
Photomontage View - Year 5

Camera make and model: Canon EOS 5D with a 50mm lens.
Date & time of photography : 06/10/2014 @ 11:03
OS reference : 327692, 344318
Viewpoint height : 195
Viewing distance : 30cm
Angle of view : 75°



VIEWPOINT 8

View from Delph Road looking north



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
 Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 12:17
 OS grid reference - 328225, 343683
 Viewpoint height (AOD) - 148m
 Distance from site - 295m

8.1 The existing view is taken from Delph Road to the south of the Application Site and is representative of views visual receptors would experience from the road and partial views from residential properties along the edge of the settlement of Delph. The view shows a low lying landscape with a medium scale artificial pond in the foreground. In the middle distance the Talponciau Farm Complex is visible behind which a woodland block follows the alignment of CEF/X-4. The Application Site's southern boundary can just be seen on the horizon beyond which the landscape rises towards the horizon. In the foreground there are several over head power lines and pylons traversing the landscape following the course of Delph Road.

8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the site is not within any statutory or non statutory landscape.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value the overall sensitivity of the visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

8.4 Part of the Application Site would be seen on the horizon in Year 1 together with partial views of the security fencing and solar panels within the southern field of the Proposed Development. Consequently the magnitude of change Year 1 is assessed as low, reducing to negligible with the proposed new mitigation planting in place and established along the sites southern boundary.

Scale of Visual Effect

8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a low magnitude of change there will be a minor adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place, in Year 1 reducing to negligible by Year 5.



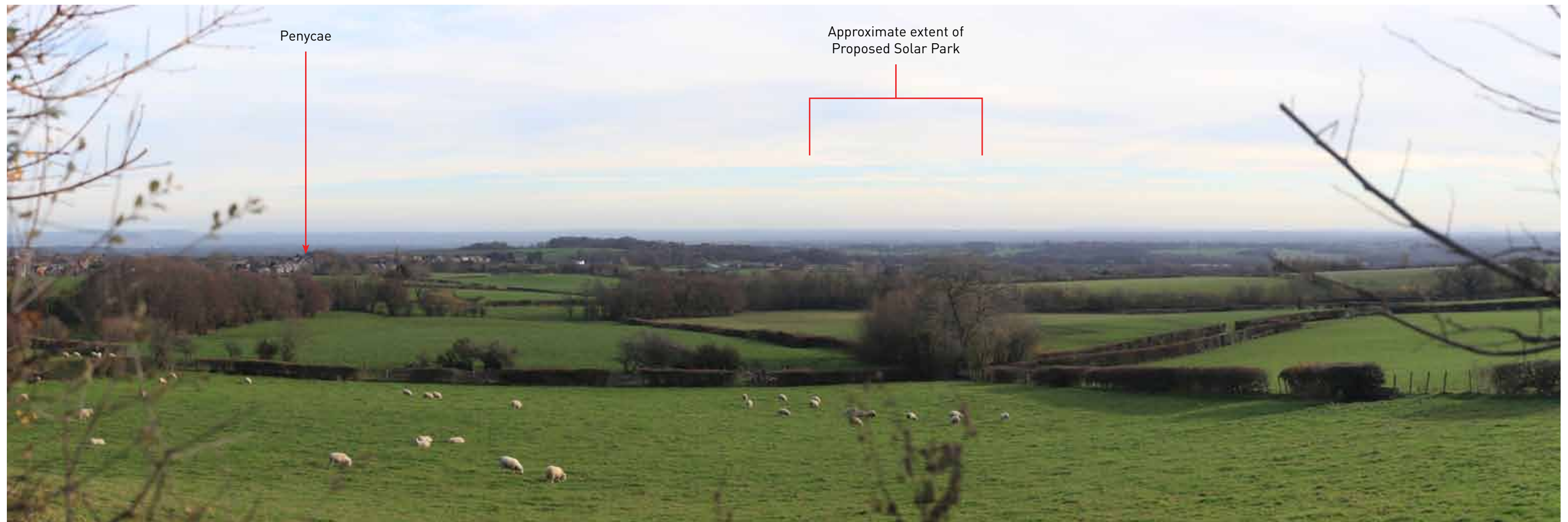
Photomontage View - Year 1

For correct perspective viewing, this image must be viewed at a distance of 30cm with one eye ,whilst curved through 75°. Document dimensions (420mm x 297mm)



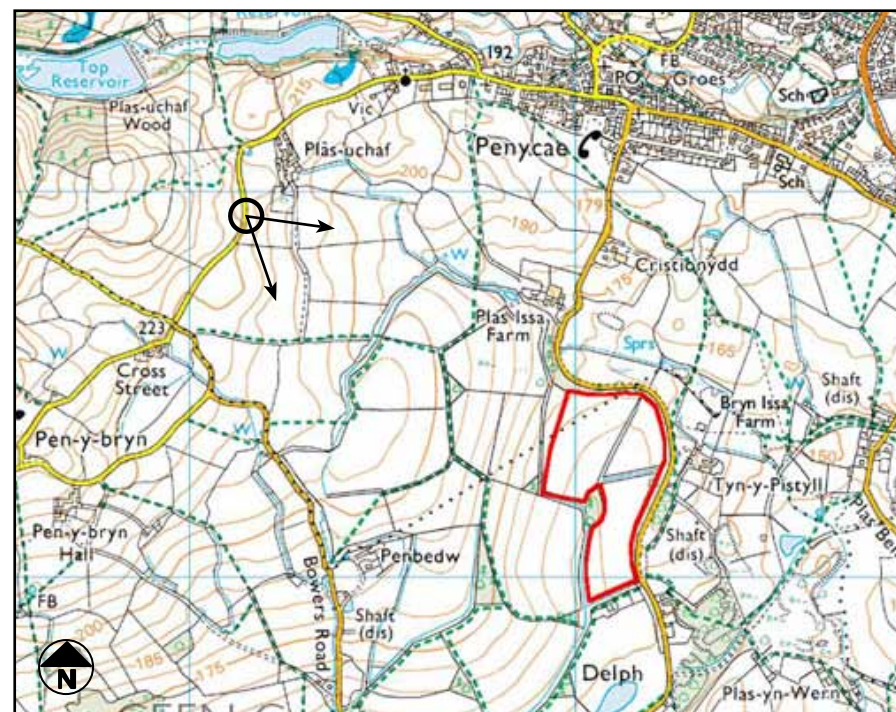
Photomontage View - Year 5

Camera make and model: Canon EOS 5D with a 50mm lens.
Date & time of photography : 06/10/2014 @ 12:17
OS reference : 328225, 343683
Viewpoint height : 148
Viewing distance : 30cm
Angle of view : 75°



VIEWPOINT 9

View from unnamed lane leading to Pen Bryn



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
 Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 12:51
 OS grid reference - 327146, 344904
 Viewpoint height (AOD) - 223m
 Distance from site - 960m

8.1 The existing view is taken from the unnamed lane leading to Pen-y-Bryn at the edge of the Ardunel Tirlum Arbenning Special Landscape Area and Clywdian Range and Dee Valley Area AONB. The existing view shows a rural undulating landscape of small to medium scale pastoral fields defined by hedgerows and occasional sections of post and wire fencing. Blocks of woodland intermittently edge some of the fields. In the distance to the east Plassa Issa Complex is visible adjacent to Delph Road and the woodland planting along its edge. The edge of Penycae is visible and Stryt- Issa on the far horizon. The Application Site can just be seen in the distance to the south east above the surrounding woodland forming a thin strip of pastoral landscape on the horizon.

8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the view is looking from the AONB and SLA over a landscape which is not contained within any statutory or non statutory designations.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. With a medium value the overall sensitivity of the visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

8.4 Part of the Application Site would just be visible on the horizon in Year 1 with partial views of solar panels within the northern and middle fields of the Proposed Development on the higher ground adjacent to Delph Road. Consequently the magnitude of change brought about by the Proposed Development in Year 1 is assessed as low, reducing to negligible by Year 5 with the proposed mitigation in place and established.

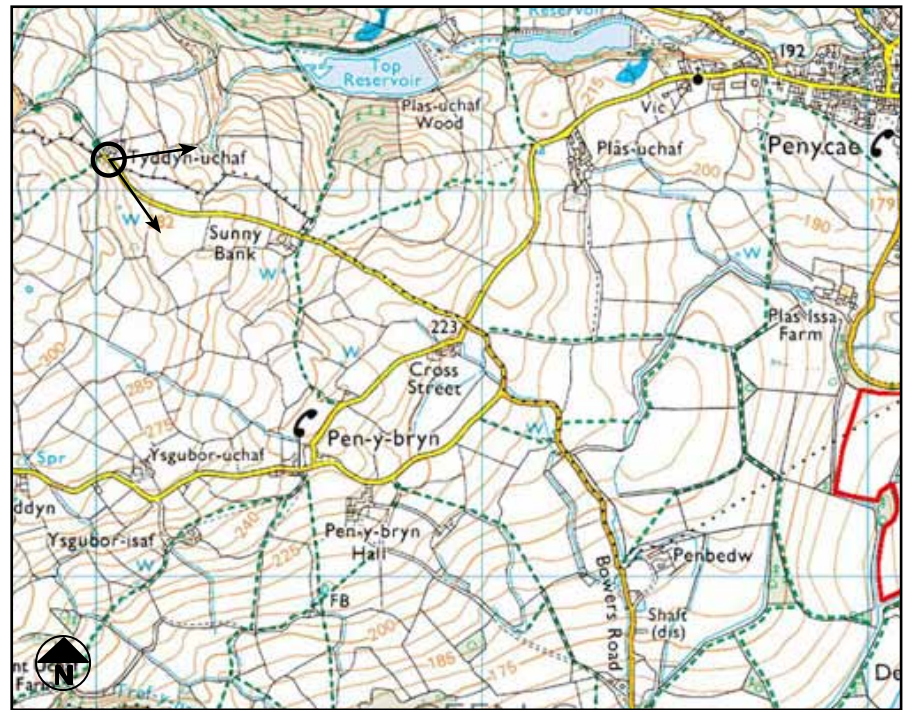
Scale of Visual Effect

8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a low magnitude of change there will be a minor adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 reducing to negligible by Year 5 for road users.



VIEWPOINT 10

View from Tyddyn U-chaf Farm



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 12:56
OS grid reference - 326046, 345079
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 286m
Distance from site - 2.05km

8.1 The existing view is taken from Tyddyn U Chaf Farm, within the Ardunel Tirlum Arbenning Special Landscape Area (SLA) and Clywdian Range and Dee Valley Area AONB and is representative of views from the Farm. The foreground of the view is dominated by the fencing and associated infrastructure of the farm, beyond which to the south an undulating landscape of pastoral fields defined by hedgerows and blocks of woodland are visible with interspersed isolated farmsteads and residential properties. In the foreground telegraph poles and power cables break the skyline. Long ranging views across the valley show the urban settlements of Stryt- Issa and Ruabon are visible with several large scale industrial buildings. The Application Site is not visible within the wider landscape due to intervening topography and vegetation, however dependant on prevailing weather conditions it is anticipated there may be a small proportion of the site visible.

8.2 The value of the view is assessed as high due to its location within the non statutory SLA and statutory AONB.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

8.3 Receptors likely to be present in this location are local residents with the viewpoint representing views likely to be gained by residential receptors which attach high value to views gained from their properties. Therefore combined with a high value and high susceptibility the visual receptors sensitivity is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

8.4 In Year 1 and Year 5 the Proposed Development would be barely discernible within the wider context of the landscape therefore the magnitude of change is assessed as negligible.

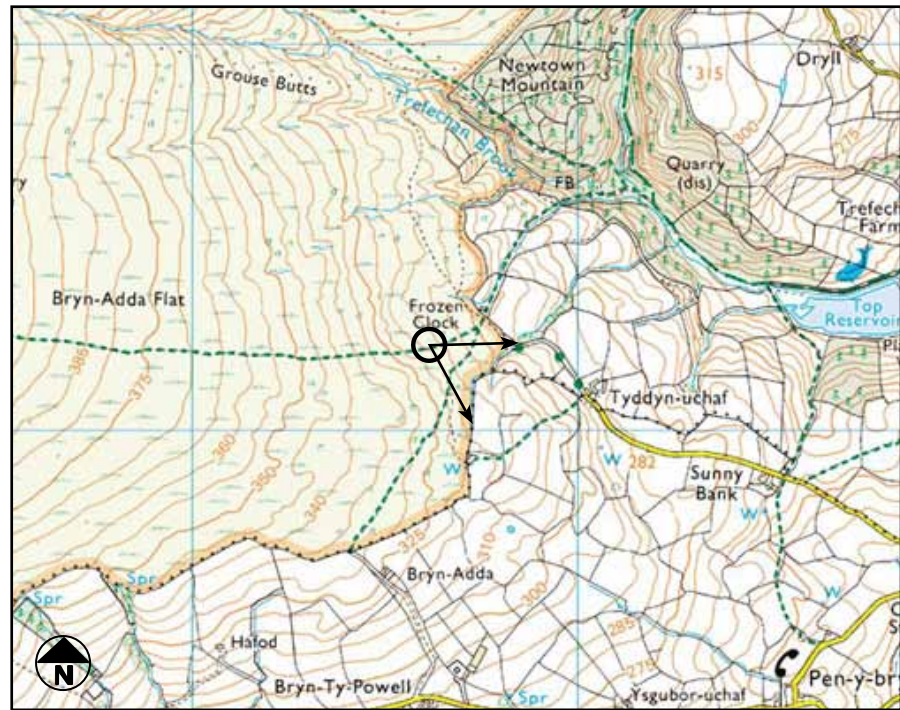
Scale of Visual Effect

8.5 With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there will be a minor adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 this would reduce to negligible/ no effect by Year 5 with the proposed mitigation measures in place and established.



VIEWPOINT 11

View from Bryn Adda Flat PRoW PEN/40



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 13:06
OS grid reference - 325624, 345298
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 308m
Distance from site - 2.5km

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from Bryn Adda Flat PRoW Pen/ 46 within the SLA and AONB. It is representative of views visual receptors will experience travelling along its route in a easterly direction. The existing view looks out over an open undulating moorland landscape looking southward to the rear of Tyddyn U Chaf Farm which is obscured by a line of mature trees. To the north east the coniferous woodland along New Town Mountain is clearly visible screening the remnants of a f disused quarry from the landscape to the south.
- 8.2 The landscape to the south is obscured by the belt of woodland in the foreground and the landscape has a sense of remoteness with little evidence of human influence other than the presence of dry stone walls, the disused quarry and the small pastoral field in the foreground.
- 8.3 The Application Site remains screened from view to the south and it is anticipated that this would remain unchanged throughout the section of the PRoW. The value of the view is assessed as high due to its location within the AONB and SLA.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.4 The view is taken from a PRoW. The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. Combined with a high value view and a high susceptibility the overall sensitivity of the viewpoint is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.5 In Year 1 and Year 5 the Proposed Development would not be visible within the wider context of the landscape therefore the magnitude of change is negligible according to the assessment criteria, however in reality there will no effect with the Proposed Development in place on the existing view.

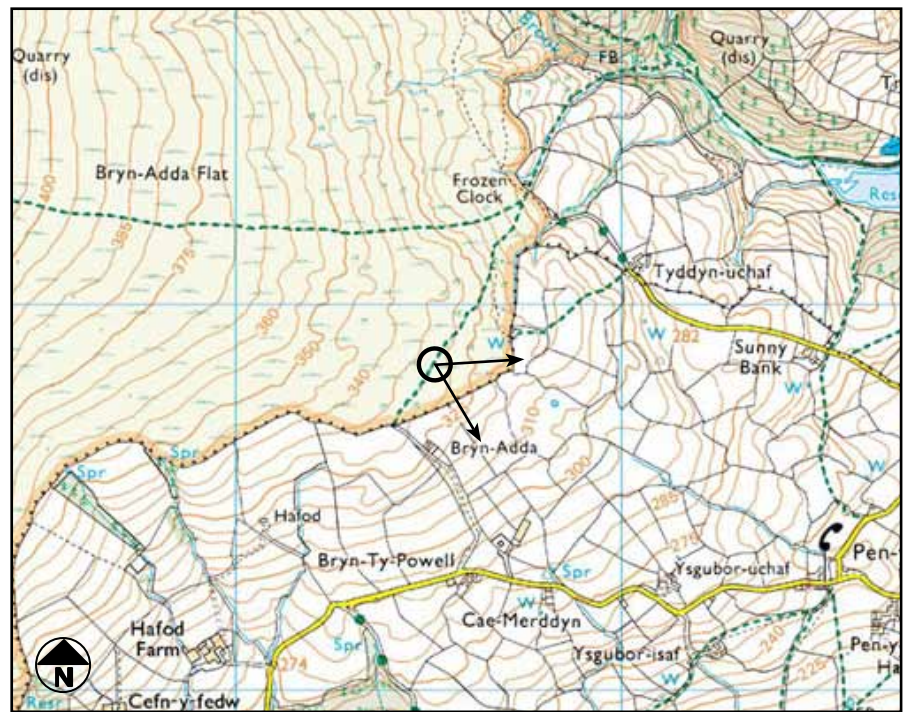
Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.6 With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there will be a minor adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 reducing to negligible/ no effect by Year 5 with the proposed mitigation measures in place and established.



VIEWPOINT 12

View from PRoW PEN 45 to rear of Bryn Adda



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 13:38
OS grid reference - 325499, 344799
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 331m
Distance from site - 2.5km

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from Bryn Adda Flat PRoW Pen/ 45 within the SLA and AONB. The existing view looks out over an open undulating moorland and coniferous woodland along New Town Mountain and the remnants of a disused quarry.
- 8.2 The landscape to the south is gently undulating with long range views across the valley towards the settlements of Penycae and beyond to Cefn Mawr and Ruabon .
- 8.3 The Application Site itself remains screened from view to the south and it is anticipated even as the visual receptor travelled further along the PRoW to a more elevated position given the distance of the Application Site it would not be discernible within the context of the wider landscape.
- 8.4 The value of the view is assessed as high due to its location within the non statutory SLA and statutory AONB.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.5 The view is taken from a PRoW. The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. Combined with a high value view and a high susceptibility to change the overall sensitivity of the viewpoint is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.6 In Year 1 and Year 5 the Proposed Development would not be visible within the wider context of the landscape therefore the magnitude of change is negligible according to the assessment criteria. However in reality there would be no effect from the Proposed Development on the existing view.

Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.7 With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there will be a minor adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 reducing to negligible/ no effect by Year 5 with the proposed mitigation measures in place and established.

8.8



VIEWPOINT 13

View from road near Plas Drain Farm



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 14:01
OS grid reference - 326526, 347311
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 304m
Distance from site - 3.2km

- 8.1 This view is taken from the unnamed lane leading to Hall Lane from Plant Gas Reservoir. The view is representative of views visual receptors would experience travelling along the lane in a easterly direction. The existing view from within the AONB and SLA shows an undulating pastoral landscape to the south defined by hedgerows and scattered windswept trees. There are several isolated farmsteads scattered across the landscape and in the far distance the edge of Penycae is visible, beyond which the existing landscape merges into the surrounding landscape. The Application Site is not discernible within the wider context of the landscape due to intervening topography, vegetation and distance.

- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as high due to its location within the non statutory SLA and statutory AONB.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value the overall sensitivity of the viewpoints visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 The Application Site would be seen on the horizon in Year 1 with partial views of solar panels within the northern and middle field of the

Proposed Development on the higher ground adjacent to Delph Road. Consequently the magnitude of change brought about by the Proposed Development in Year 1 is assessed as low, reducing to negligible by Year 5 with the proposed mitigation in place and established.

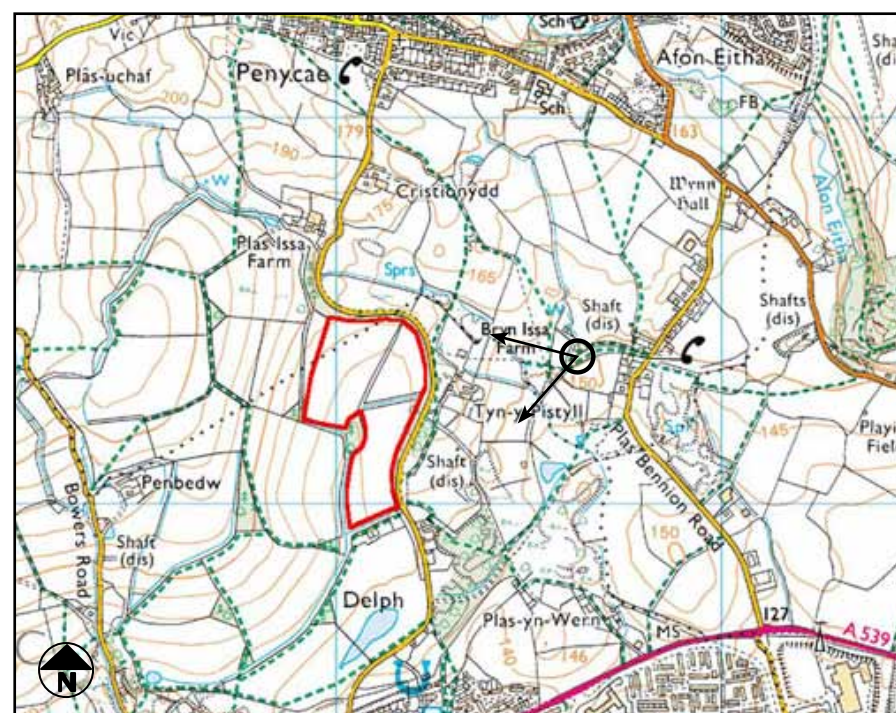
Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a low magnitude of change there will be a minor adverse effect on the view with the proposed development in place in Year 1 reducing to negligible by Year 5 for road users.



VIEWPOINT 14

View from Bryn Issa Farm and PRoW PEN53 looking west



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
 Date & time of photograph - 08/10/2014 @ 11:19
 OS grid reference - 328616, 344393
 Viewpoint height (AOD) - 153m
 Distance from site - 370m

8.1 The existing view looks out over a low lying pastoral landscape defined by post and rail fencing and woodland which runs along the edge of Delph Road. The rear of Tyn-y-Pistyll Farm is visible through the existing woodland, however the Application Site itself remains obscured from view.

8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the landscape is not contained within any statutory or non statutory designations.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

8.3 The view is taken from a PRoW. The susceptibility of PRoWs is generally assessed as being high. This is because an important part of the leisure experience in following PROWs, especially in countryside locations, can include an appreciation of the surrounding landscape. Combined with a high value view and a high susceptibility to change the overall sensitivity of the visual receptor is assessed as high.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

8.4 The Application Site would not be visible due to intervening vegetation along Delph Road, therefore the magnitude is assessed as negligible in Year 1 and 5.

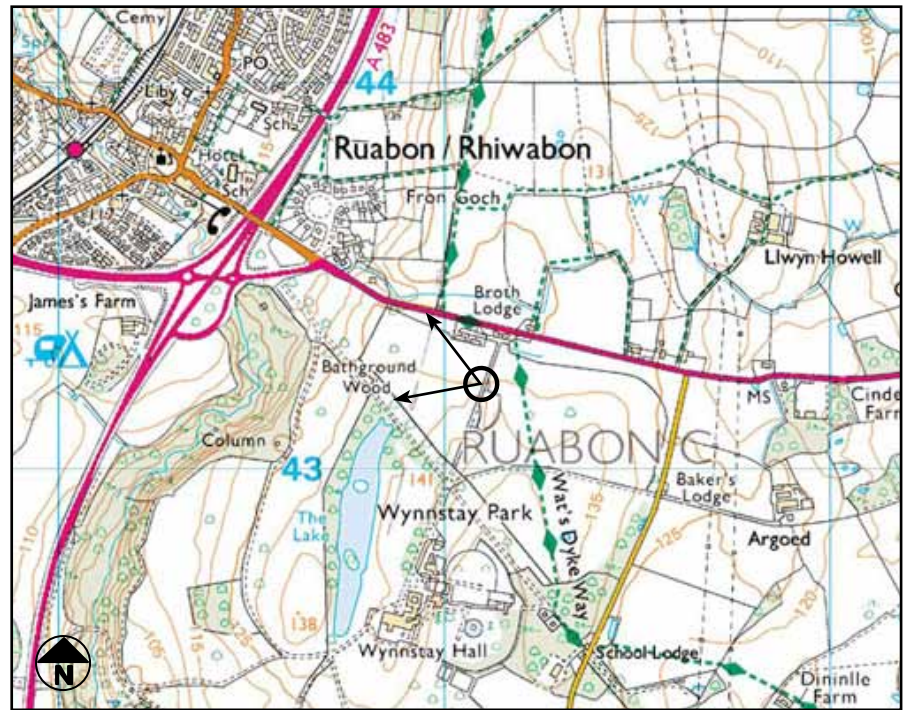
Scale of Visual Effect

8.5 With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there will be a minor adverse effect on the view according to the assessment criteria, however in reality there will be no change/ no effect on the view in Year 1 and 5.



VIEWPOINT 15

View from Wynnstay Park



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 08/10/2014 @ 12:29
OS grid reference - 331111, 343220
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 130m
Distance from site - 3km

8.1 The existing view is taken from the entrance drive to Wynnstay Park and is representative of views visual receptors would experience travelling along its route. The existing view looks out over a low lying landscape which is edge with a line of mature trees obscuring views to the south and Wynnstay Hall. To the west the outskirts of Ruabon can be seen beyond which the landform gradually rises upward towards the horizon. The Application Site itself is not discernible within the wider landscape and obscured from view.

8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as it is not within a non statutory or statutory designation.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value the overall sensitivity of the viewpoints visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

8.4 The Application Site would remain obscured from view by the existing vegetation along the boundary of Wynnstay Hall topography and intervening built form, therefore the magnitude is assessed as negligible in Year 1 and 5..

Scale of Visual Effect

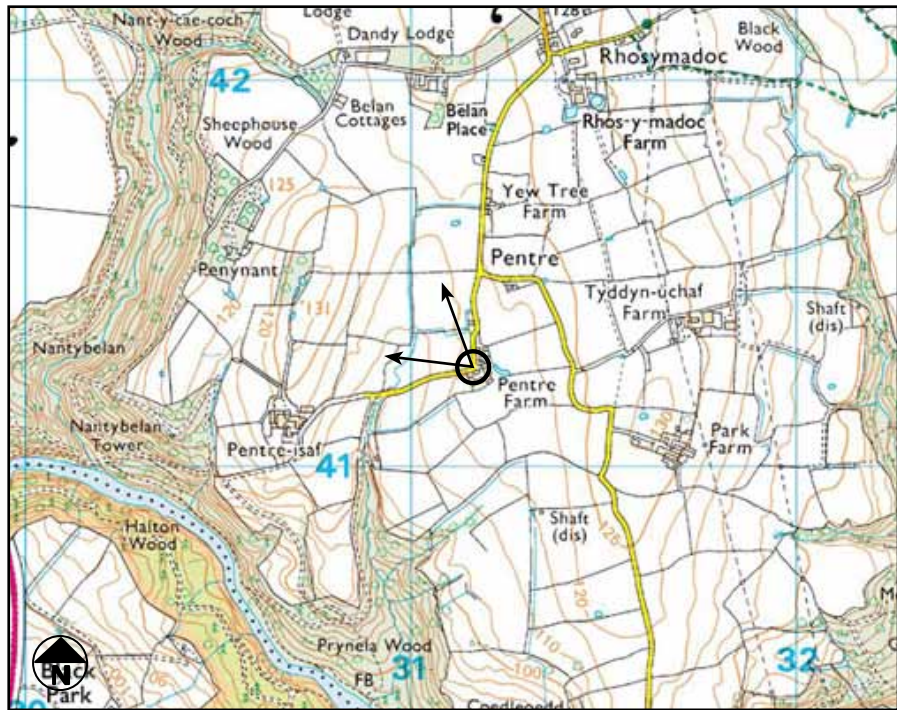
8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there will be a negligible effect at Year 1 and 5.

Proposed solar park is not discernible in wider landscape



VIEWPOINT 16

View from Pentre Farm



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 08/10/2014 @ 12:38
OS grid reference - 331158, 341257
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 119m
Distance from site - 4.04km

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from the lane leading to the village of Pentre opposite Pentre Farm and is representative of views the receptor would experience looking over the field gate towards the Proposed Development. The view looks out over a large arable field beyond which the landform rises towards the horizon and obscures views to the west and the A483 (T). Several mature trees edge the arable field and to the north Nant-y-cae-coch Wood obscures views to Wynnstay Hall. Beyond which in the distance the edge of Cefn Mawr and Plas Madoc is visible within the valley floor. The Application Site itself is not visible within the wider landscape.
- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as it is not within a non statutory or statutory designation.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.3 The Application Site would remain obscured from view by the existing vegetation, topography and intervening built form within the surrounding landscape, therefore the magnitude is assessed as negligible in Year 1 and 5.

Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.4 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there will be a negligible effect in Year 1 and 5.

Proposed solar park is not discernible in wider landscape

Pontyllste aqueduct

Cefn Mawr

Plas Madoc

View from Llangollen Canal and PRow looking north



42 L.0321 LAND TO THE WEST OF DELPH ROAD | APPRAISAL OF LANDSCAPE & VISUAL EFFECTS

- ### Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- ### Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- ### Scale of Visual Effect

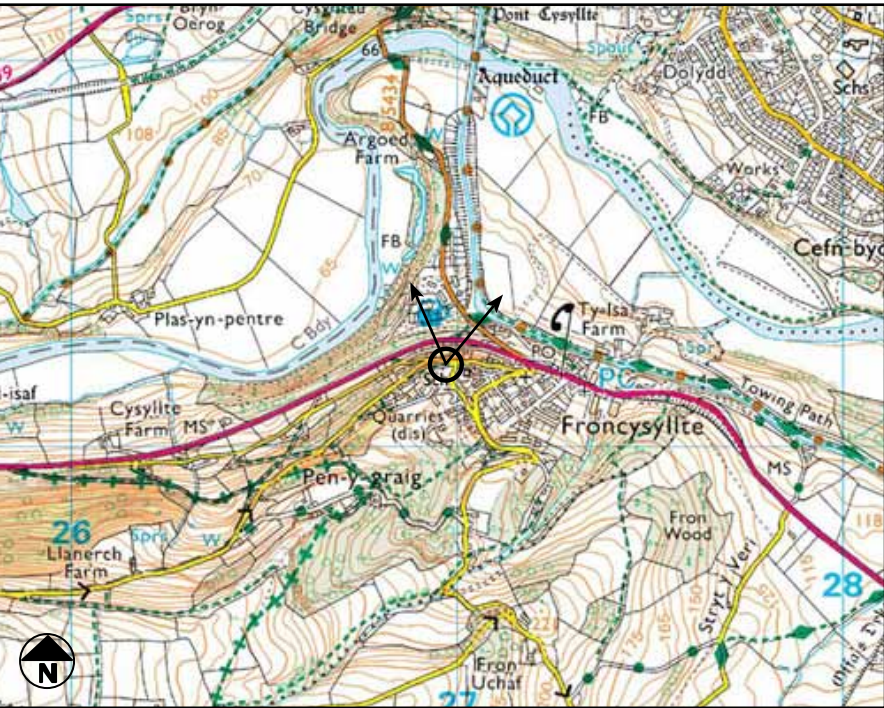
- 8.6 With a high sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there would be a minor adverse affect according to the assessment criteria. However in reality there will be no change/ effect in Year 1 and 5.

Proposed solar park is not discernible in wider landscape



VIEWPOINT 18

View from unnamed lane leading to Froncysyllte



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 11:52
OS grid reference - 326936, 341233
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 125m
Distance from site - 2.91km

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from the unnamed lane off the A5 leading to the settlement of Froncysyllte which falls within the boundary of the SLA, AONB and World Heritage Site Buffer zone. The existing view is representative of views visual receptors would experience as they travel along the road towards Froncysyllte. Views to the north look out over the existing valley towards the Pontcysyllte Aquaduct and the settlements of Trevor, Cefn Mawr and Plas Madoc which rise up the valley slope towards the horizon.
- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as although the view is taken from within the SLA, AONB and World Heritage Site there are several visual detractors within the wider context of the landscape that detract from its overall value.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value the overall sensitivity of the viewpoints visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 In Year 1 and Year 5 the Proposed Development would not be visible within the wider context of the landscape therefore the magnitude of change is negligible.

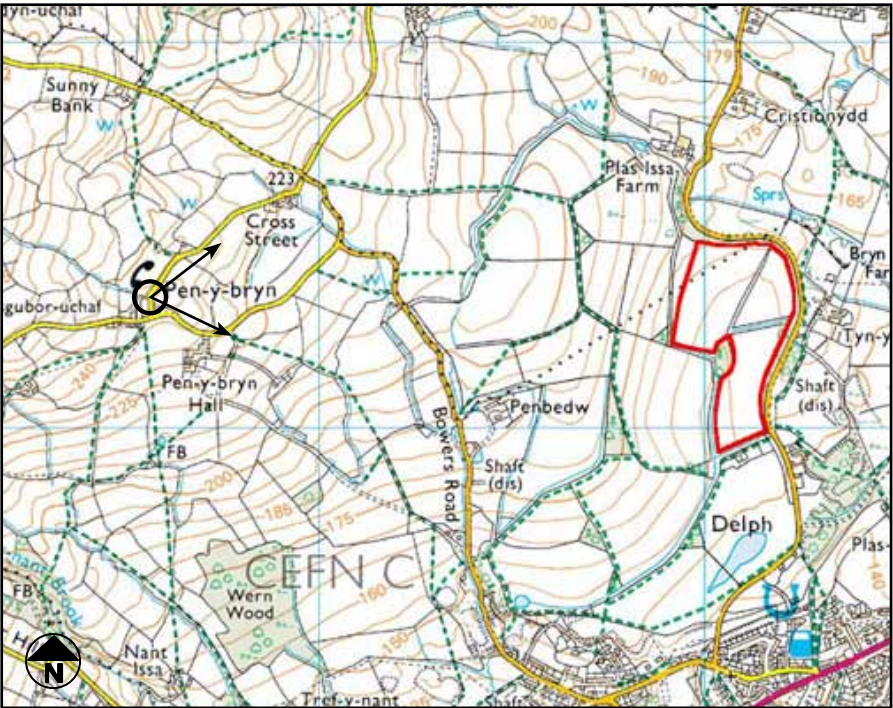
Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there would be a negligible effect in Year 1 and 5.



VIEWPOINT 19

View from farm access along lane from Pen Bryn to Penycae



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
Date & time of photograph - 06/10/2014 @ 11:27
OS grid reference - 326572, 344331
Viewpoint height (AOD) - 242m
Distance from site - 1.35km

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from the edge of the AONB and SLA looking out over an undulating pastoral landscape edged with hedgerows and occasional blocks of woodland. To the west the edge of Penycae is just visible on the horizon beyond which Stryt Issa merges into the larger settlement of Rhosllanerchrugog. To the south the edge of Penycae is visible and the outline of Delph Road is seen. Part of the Application Site is just visible in the distance through the surrounding intervening vegetation, however it forms a small proportion of the overall view.
- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as the view is looking from the AONB over a landscape which is not contained within any statutory or non statutory landscape designations.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value the overall sensitivity of the viewpoints visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 In Year 1 the Proposed Development would be partially visible within the wider context of the landscape therefore the magnitude of change is as assessed as low, reducing to negligible by Year 5 with mitigation measures in place.

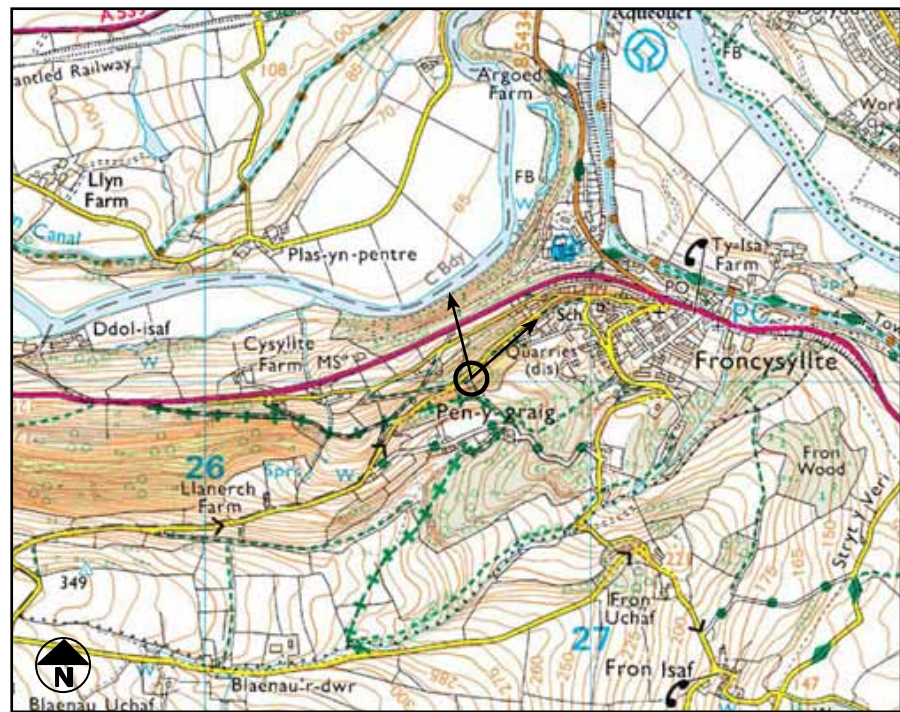
Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a low magnitude of change there would be a minor adverse effect in Year 1 reducing to negligible by Year 5.



VIEWPOINT 20

View from Ochyr Yr looking north across the valley



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D
 Date & time of photograph - 08/10/2014 @ 14:40
 OS grid reference - 326668, 341006

Viewpoint height (AOD) - 158m
 Distance from site - 3.23km

- 8.1 The existing view is taken from Ochyr Yr in Froncysyllte which falls within the boundary of the SLA, AONB and World Heritage Site Buffer zone. The existing view is representative of views visual receptors would experience travelling along the road. Views to the north look out over the existing valley towards the Pontcysyllte Aquaduct and the settlements of Trevor, Cefn Mawr and Plas Madoc which rises up the valley slope towards the horizon.
- 8.2 The value of the view is assessed as medium as although the view is taken from within the SLA, AONB and World Heritage Site there are several visual detractors within the wider context of the landscape that detract from its overall value.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 8.3 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value the overall sensitivity of the viewpoints visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

- 8.4 In Year 1 and Year 5 the Proposed Development would not be visible within the wider context of the landscape therefore the magnitude of change is negligible in Year 1 and 5.

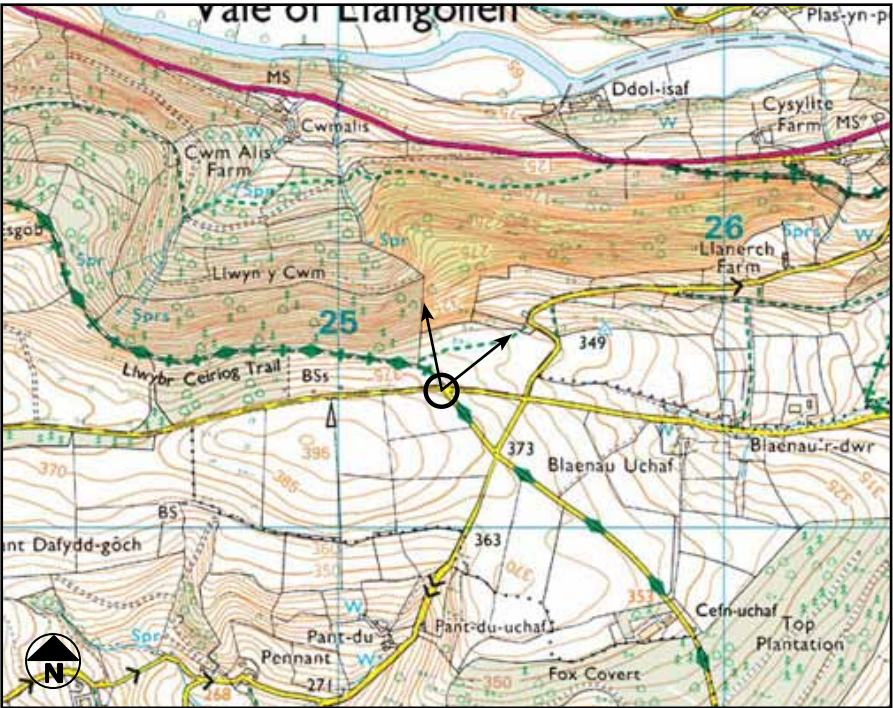
Scale of Visual Effect

- 8.5 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there would be a negligible effect in Year 1 and 5.



VIEWPOINT 21

View from top of Ochyr Yr looking north



Camera make & model - Canon EOS 5D Viewpoint height (AOD) - 361m
Date & time of photograph - 08/10/2014 @ 14:44 Distance from site - 4.5km
OS grid reference - 325311, 340368

8.1 The existing view is taken from the top of Ochyr Yr which is a narrow lane within Froncysyllte that rises from the valley floor towards the upper slopes of the valley to the south of the Application Site. The view is representative of views visual receptors would experience travelling along its route. The foreground is dominated by the large pastoral field below which along the valley floor the settlements of Llangollen, Trevor Cefn Mawr, and Plas Madoc is visible in between which a pastoral landscape characterizes the upper slopes. The views are long ranging across the valley and dependent on prevailing weather as to the clarity of view. In the far distance the Application Site is visible as it rises towards Delph Road and the artificial pond to the south.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

8.2 Road users are not necessarily travelling the road for leisure purposes and therefore an appreciation of the landscape is not necessarily a primary concern. Road users are therefore assessed as being of medium susceptibility to the type of development proposed. Combined with a medium value the overall sensitivity of the viewpoints visual receptors is assessed as medium.

Predicted View at Year 1 and Year 5

8.3 In Year 1 and Year 5 the Proposed Development would be partially visible within the wider context of the landscape, however given the distance of the view from the site and intervening topography, built form and vegetation the magnitude of change is assessed as negligible as although the site itself is visible, it merges into the wider context of the

landscape at this distance and would not be a noticeable feature within the landscape forming a very small proportion of the overall view.

Scale of Visual Effect

8.4 With a medium sensitivity and a negligible magnitude of change there would be a negligible effect on the view in Year 1 and 5.

9.0 MITIGATION & ENHANCEMENT

9.1 Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the design of the Proposed Development through an iterative design process. The mitigation measures are therefore an integral part of the Proposed Development rather than an add-on.

Mitigation during the Construction Phase

9.2 Existing trees and hedgerows to be retained would be protected during the construction phase to prevent or minimise any adverse effects on them and their root protection areas.

Mitigation of Effects on Landscape Features and Elements

9.3 The existing hedgerows between the three fields would be maintained and managed to a height of around 2.5 to 3m. Any existing gaps greater than 1m (e.g. at gateways that are no longer required) would be in-filled with new planting using a locally native species mix. Additional planting would be undertaken along Delph Road in order to produce a tree belt screen which would provide partial filtered views of the site as the visual receptor travelled along Delph Road which would increase the proposed planting reached maturity.

Mitigation of Effects on Landscape Character

9.4 The very limited effects that have been identified on local landscape character, combined with the proposed new and enhancement planting mean that no additional mitigation measures are considered necessary in relation to effects on landscape character.

Mitigation of Effects on Visual Amenity

9.5 As can be seen from the assessment of effects on visual amenity, the existing vegetation cover and landform means that the effects of the Proposed Development on visual amenity would be limited to receptors in the immediate vicinity of the site within 2 km. The increased management and planting up of gaps in the hedge, would reduce any effects on visual amenity even further.

Summary

9.6 It is considered that the combination of retention and enhancement of existing planting, together with new planting, would result in a strong landscape framework for the Proposed Development which in the longer term would enhance the landscape of the existing site.

9.7 As a result of the above it is considered that there would be no additional mitigation works required to address any residual effects arising from the Proposed Development.

10.0 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

10.1 Following consultation with Wrexham Borough Council's Planning Officer, Philip Forster on the 3rd December 2014 with reference to the consented or other proposed solar developments within the 5km study area, principally the consented Legacy Site, Planning Application for a 3 MW solar farm at Bronwylfa Road, Wrexham planning application number P/2014/0263. It was agreed that a Cumulative Assessment was not required to be carried out for this application due to the proposed location of the solar farms in relation to each other, intervening vegetation and landform. It is anticipated from an initial site visit there would be no Cumulative Effects present on landscape character or visual aspects.

11.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

- 11.2

This landscape appraisal relates to a proposed solar farm on 10.67 hectares of grassland to the south of Plas Issa Farm. The Application Site comprises of 3 parcels of land as indicated in Figure 2.
- 11.3

The Application Site is not covered by any statutory landscape designations. However, the Application Sites environs are subject to a local Special Landscape Area (SLA) (Wrexham Borough Local Plan designation) and the site itself a Green Barrier designation. It is also within 1.5 km of the Clywdian Range and Dee Valley AONB. Based on the analysis of the ZTV of the proposed development it is anticipated that the Proposed Development will be partly visible from the AONB and the Special Landscape Area . However the majority of views from these designated landscapes are partial only and screened by the existing landform and intervening vegetation and built form. The effects on visual amenity within these areas are therefore considerably reduced.
- 11.4

It is considered that the proposed solar farm as indicated on the submitted layout plan can be effectively accommodated within the Application Site.
- 11.5

The structural integrity of the Application Site’s environment is derived from its pattern of landscape elements and features. During the time limited operational phase of the development, there would be an inevitable change in the land use of the Application Site from a farmed pastoral agriculture to a combined dual land use of solar energy generation with pasture for sheep grazing. It is considered that over time any adverse effect on the landscape elements and features that currently characterise the site would diminish and instead there would be an overall net beneficial effect upon the tree, hedgerow and grassland resource with the Proposed Development in place. This would be achieved through the retention and management of existing trees and hedgerows and the implementation of and enhanced tree and hedgerow planting together with the implementation of positive management regime to diversify the range of grassland habitats and species on the Application Site. These environmental enhancements would have the potential to provide a positive legacy beyond the lifetime of the proposed solar farm.
- 11.6

Through careful design considerations, the degree of change that would occur to the landscape elements and features as a result of the Proposed Development being in place would not cause unacceptable harm given the Application Site’s landscape context.
- 11.7

The perceived change to landscape character of the Application Site would be greater than the actual, physical change to the landscape whose inherent characteristics would be entirely retained for the duration of the operational phase of the proposed solar farm. The only means by which the Proposed Development might have an effect on the character of the wider landscape would be in terms of those perceptual and experiential qualities of the landscape, principal of which would be visual.
- 11.8

It is considered that the physical characteristics of the proposed solar farm, have been designed so as to give the proposals a light ‘footprint’. The proposed solar farm has been designed and sited so as not to comprise a single mass of solar arrays but instead comprises a number of linked arrays and associated structures that would be integrated into the existing field pattern. This would enable the solar farm to be effectively accommodated into the landscape of the Application Site itself without causing unacceptably harmful change to the actual fabric of the Application Site.
- 11.9

The key landscape elements/features, trees, woodland, grassland and topography would be retained and through new planting the trees and hedgerows would be enhanced. The existing grassland would be enhanced through the implementation of a new management regime that would help create new habitats and greater species diversity. There would be an effect upon landscape elements but through the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, such a change has the potential to bring about long term net benefits beyond the lifetime of the proposed solar farm. The actual level of harm to the landscape elements/features that characterise the landscape of the Application Site would, with mitigation, be minor in scale and these would continue to remain and prevail with the solar farm in operation.
- 11.10

In terms of the character of the wider landscape the proposed solar farm would bring about no physical alteration to those determining landscape characteristics of the countryside as identified within the various published Landscape Character Assessments. The proposed solar farm would be physically contained within the boundaries of the Application Site. As such there would be no physical effect upon the key landscape elements and features associated with the wider landscape beyond the Application Site boundary.
- 11.11

The actual number of vantage points from where the proposals might be seen would be restricted through a combination of intervening vegetation and changes in topography between the visual receptor (person) and the Application Site. Consequently, the proposed solar farm would not have an unacceptable level of harm to the wider landscape’s character or appearance in the context of existing development.
- 11.12

Though the wider landscape surrounding the Application Site, including the SLA and AONB, is primarily agricultural in nature, it is punctuated by and already accommodates a wide range of human influences and infrastructure including roads, settlements, quarries, forestry and telecommunication masts. Consequently, although containing a significant amount of agricultural land overall and therefore predominantly rural in nature, the local context in which the Application Site is situated cannot be said to be ‘undeveloped’ countryside free from infrastructure. It is instead an active, settled and working rural environment that forms part of a wider landscape that incorporates transport networks, and a number of settlements.
- 11.13

The presence of such existing infrastructure and development within the wider landscape, including that of the SLA and AONB is demonstrable of the fact that the wider landscape and the AONB and SLA are quite capable of accepting infrastructure in its rural context. In this context, the character, appearance and amenity of the local landscape would continue to prevail with the proposed solar farm development in place.
- 11.14

It is anticipated that the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site although in close proximity to the Proposed Development would not be directly affected by the proposals, with intervening topography, built form and vegetation resulting in the Proposed Development being obscured from view from the photographs we have taken within the LVIA which have considered its location.
- 11.15

The physical changes brought about the proposed solar farm would be confined to the Application Site, so that whilst the character of the Application Site itself would change primarily in terms of land use from a purely agricultural one to a dual one of solar energy generation an agriculture, the physical characteristics of the wider landscape including the SLA would remain unchanged.
- 11.16

The majority of the SLA and AONB would be visually unaffected with the proposed solar farm in place. As a consequence of this the visual amenity of the wider landscape of the SLA and the AONB as perceived from public vantage points such as public highways and public rights of way would largely be unaffected by the proposals being in place.
- 11.17

The existing elements and features that characterise the Application Site in particularly topography, woodlands and trees would be retained as integral components of the proposed solar farm. Though the character of the Application Site would inevitably change as a consequence of the proposed solar farm being in place with a change in the land use of the Application Site from pastoral to pastoral with solar energy generation, the physical characteristics of the wider landscape as expressed in the various LANDMAP aspect areas would remain substantially unchanged.
- 11.18

It is considered that the design of the proposals has been well considered and that consequently the proposals can be effectively assimilated into the existing landscape with its associated designations and historic sensitivities without unacceptable harm.