Fenn's Bank IVC

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Prepared for

Veolia

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Well House Barns, Chester Road, Bretton, Chester, CH4 0DH
1st Floor, Barfield House, Alderley Road, Wilmslow, SK9 1PL
Maling Exchange, Studio 305, Hoults Yard, Walker Road, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE6 2HL

T: 0344 8700 007
enquiries@axis.co.uk
www.axis.co.uk

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Axis has been appointed to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal ('LVA') of a proposed composting facility ('the Proposed Development'), located at the former Befesa Salt Slags site at Fenn's Bank, near Whitchurch. The Proposed Development would be located within the Wrexham County Borough Council ('WCBC') area.

1.1.2 This standalone Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) report appraises the effects of the Proposed Development upon landscape character and visual amenity. This LVA provides:

i) A description of the baseline situation within the Site and Study Area.
ii) A summary of landscape and visual mitigation embedded within the site selection, layout, and design.
iii) An appraisal of the landscape and visual effects associated with the Proposed Development.

1.2 The Proposed Development

1.2.1 The Proposed Development is described in detail in the Planning Statement and illustrated on the Planning Drawings. In summary it would comprise the redevelopment of an existing industrial facility, including:

i) Retention of the existing main processing building (max. roof height 13.4m).
ii) New emissions stack (height 27m).
iii) Ancillary structures, including a new biofilter building (maximum roof height 7.8m) and associated external hardstanding.
iv) Landscape enhancements within external areas.

1.2.2 Although the biofilter building would introduce an additional built element, it would be positioned immediately adjacent to the retained processing building. Views from the south would be effectively screened by the processing building, while in views from the north the biofilter building would be visually contained by, the larger processing building which would provide a backcloth.

1.2.3 The landscape proposals are illustrated on Drawing 5039-01-005 and would include:

i) Retention and enhanced management of existing vegetation.
ii) New native woodland planting.
iii) New specimen tree planting.
iv) New native hedgerow planting.
v) New species-diverse grassland.
vi) New wet grassland.

2.0 LEGISLATION AND POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A review of national and local landscape policies and planning guidance that are specifically relevant to the LVA has been carried out and are summarised below.

2.2 European Landscape Convention

2.2.1 The UK Government is a signatory of the European Landscape Convention (ELC), which became binding in March 2007. The ELC is aimed at the protection, management and planning of all landscapes and raising awareness of the value of a living landscape. It relates chiefly to public bodies and to the policies, plans and programmes produced by these.

2.2.2 The LVA is a development specific process which accords with Article 6C. The LVA is informed by extant Landscape Character Assessment studies which more directly relate to the provisions of Article 6C.

2.3 Planning Policy

2.3.1 Full details of the planning policy context for the Proposed Development are set out in the Planning Statement. Relevant planning policy and guidance documents are:

i) Planning Policy Wales ('PPW')[1].
ii) Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (1996-2011) ('UDP')[2].
iii) unadopted Local Development Plan ('LDP')[3].

National

2.3.2 National planning policy relevant to the potential landscape and visual effects is set out in PPW.

[1] Welsh Government (2024). *Planning Policy Wales, Edition 12.* Available online at: https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2024-07/planning-policy-wales-edition-12.pdf
[2] Wrexham County Borough Council (2005*) Wrexham Unitary Development Plan (1996-2011).* Available online at: Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011
[3] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2023. *Wrexham County Borough Local Development Plan 2013-2028*

2.3.3 PPW sets out the Government's planning objectives to contribute to and enhance Welsh landscapes by ensuring that local authorities:

"protect and enhance their special characteristics, whilst paying due regard to the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits they provide, and to their role in creating valued places" (Para.6.33, Page 139).

2.3.4 It also states the importance of:

"*Considering landscape at the outset of formulating strategies and polices in development plans and when proposing development, is key to sustaining and enhancing their special qualities, and delivering the maximum well being benefits for present and future generations as well as helping to deliver an effective and integrated approach to natural resource management over the long term."* (Para. 6.33, Page 139)

2.3.5 In relation to local landscape designations:

"Planning authorities should provide for the conservation and, where appropriate, enhancement of local landscapes. This may include policies for landscape features, characteristics and qualities of local significance, and the designation of Special Landscape Areas (SLAs). Planning authorities should state which features, characteristics or qualities require extra protection, and explain how the policy or designation will achieve this protection. LANDMAP and any associated landscape character assessments (including the register of historic landscapes in Wales) should be used to inform local landscape policies and SPG, and to help identify or revise SLAs" (para 6.3.12, page 142)

2.4 Local

2.4.1 The adopted local development plan for WCBC comprises the Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011 ('UDP')[4] which was adopted in February 2005. However, the local development plan has been through significant upheaval in recent years. WCBC adopted the Local Development Plan 2013-2028 ('LDP')[5] on 20

[4] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2005. *Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011*
[5] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2023. *Wrexham County Borough Local Development Plan 2013-2028*

December 2023, however, the decision to adopt the LDP has subsequently been quashed by a High Court Order issued on 12 June 2025. The LDP has therefore been returned to unadopted status and the UDP has been returned to being the adopted development plan.

2.4.2 Relevant policies from the UDP and LDP are discussed below

UDP

2.4.3 Policy PS2 of the UDP requires that development should not materially detriment landscape/townscape character.

2.4.4 Policy GDP1: Development Objectives requires that built development should accord with the character of the site and contribute positively to the appearance of the nearby locality.

2.4.5 Policy EC4: Hedgerows, Trees and Woodland requires that development should conserve and manage hedgerows trees and woodland. New planting should be included in proposals to enhance landscape character. Loss or significant damage to valuable features will not be permitted.

2.4.6 Policy EC5: Special Landscape Areas requires that within areas designated as Special Landscape Areas (SLA), priority will be given the conservation and enhancement of the landscape. Development is required to conform to a high standard of design and landscape, and special attention will be paid to minimising its visual impact.

2.4.7 A series of Local Planning Guidance Notes ('LPGN') have been prepared to support the UDP. These include:

i) LPGN 7: Landscape and Development[6].
ii) LPGN 17: Trees and Development[7].
iii) LPGN26: Landscape and Industrial Development[8].

[6] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2003. *Landscape Planning Guidance Note 7. Landscape and Development*
[7] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2000 (updated 2012). *Landscape Planning Guidance Note 17. Trees and Development*
[8] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2003. *Landscape Planning Guidance Note 26. Landscape and Industrial Development*

2.4.8 The three LPGN aim to improve design standards, and have some relevance to eth development of landscape proposals.

LDP

2.4.9 The key relevant element of the LDP is the evidence base produced to support it. This included a review of local landscape designations within the WCBC area, which is discussed further in Section 4.0.

3.0 APPRAISAL METHODOLOGY

3.1 Guidance

3.1.1 The method of appraisal is based on the principles established in the best practice guidance, the *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*[9], ('GLVIA'), and the GLVIA Clarifications published by the Landscape Institute in 2024[10]. The GLVIA states that any assessment of effects should be tailored to the specific nature and likely potential effects of the development proposed.

3.1.2 This LVA also follows the Landscape Institute's guidance regarding the production of visualisations ('TGN 06/19')[11].

3.1.3 This LVA has followed a methodology which has been developed using the published good practice guidelines set out in the GLVIA3. A detailed methodology followed in undertaking this LVA is set out in Section 3.3.

Scope of the Appraisal

3.1.4 This appraisal considers the likely landscape and visual effects of the Proposed Development. The appraisal focuses on landscape character (the effect on the landscape resource) and visual amenity (the visual effect on people's views).

3.1.5 The appraisal focuses on the operational phase effects of the Proposed Development with only brief consideration of effects during construction. The appraisal focuses on effects of the Proposed Development immediately after completion of construction.

[9] Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 3rd edition 2013. *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*. Routledge: Abingdon.
[10] Landscape Institute, 2024. *Notes and Clarifications on Aspects of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Third edition (GLVIA3)*. LITGN-2024-01
[11] Landscape Institute, 2019. *Visual Representation of Development Proposals. Technical Guidance Note 06/19*

3.2 Study Area

3.2.1 The appropriate Study Area for any LVA comprises the area within which the Proposed Development is likely to be visible and capable of resulting in notable visual effects or influence upon landscape character. The extent of this area will vary according to the nature and scale of the Proposed Development and the nature of the terrain in the surrounding area. Large and contrasting elements for example have the potential to be more visible at a similar distance to smaller, less obtrusive elements. Location in the landscape can also be influential, for example in relation to skylines.

3.2.2 The Study Area for the Proposed Development comprises a 2km radius and it is presented in **Figures 1-b** and **Figure 2**. The Study Area extent has been determined through professional judgement, zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) analysis, as presented in **Figures 1a-b**, and site studies**.** This is considered adequate given the maximum height of the Proposed Development (27 m) and localised screening by landform and tree cover.

3.3 Appraisal Methodology and Criteria

Introduction

3.3.1 LVA is a tool used to systematically identify and assess the nature of the effects of a Proposed Development upon the landscape and upon people's views. Through an iterative design process, it can also inform changes to the development and evolution of mitigation strategies, minimising effects where possible.

3.3.2 As advocated by the GLVIA, the scope of the LVA is proportionate to the anticipated likely effects of the Proposed Development.

3.3.3 Professional judgement is a very important part of the LVA process at every stage of the assessment. This judgement is exercised within a framework that transparently sets out the steps in the appraisal process which have led to the overall conclusions.

3.3.4 To ensure the transparency of the appraisal and judgements made, the LVA process follows a standard approach, namely:

i) The establishment of the baseline conditions against which the effects of the Proposed Development will be appraised.
ii) The determination of the nature of the receptor likely to be affected, i.e. its sensitivity.
iii) The prediction of the nature of the effects likely to occur, i.e. the magnitude of the effect.
iv) An appraisal of the level of effect experienced by receptors, taking into account any proposed mitigation measures.

3.3.5 **Table 3.1** provides a summary of the factors that are considered in reaching a conclusion on the level of effect.

Table 3.1 - LVA Process

Sensitivity (Nature of Receptor)		Magnitude (Nature of the Effect)			
Susceptibility to Change	Value	Scale of Effect	Extent of the Effect	Duration of the Effect	Reversibility of the Effect
High Medium Low	High Medium Low	High Medium Low Negligible	Receptor-specific (terms used include Extensive, Limited and Localised)	Long-term Medium-term Short-term	Irreversible Partly reversible Reversible

3.3.6 An explanation is provided below of how these factors are considered together to reach an overall professional judgement on sensitivity, magnitude and level of effect.

Sensitivity

Overview

3.3.7 The sensitivity of landscape and visual receptors is identified via a combined judgement of their susceptibility to the type of change proposed and the value attached to the landscape. The assessment of sensitivity has been expressed using a three-point scale of High, Medium or Low, as are the individual judgements regarding susceptibility and value. Where professional judgement suggests it is required, intermediate levels of sensitivity have been expressed to refine the assessment, i.e. Low to Medium or Medium to High. 'Negligible' and 'No' levels of susceptibility, value and sensitivity are excluded from the scale as it is considered

that all landscapes possess some sensitivity to change, whether that is documented or not.

3.3.8 When combining susceptibility to change and value, the following consistently applies:

i) A receptor which is considered to be of High susceptibility to change and High value would be assessed as being of High sensitivity.
ii) A receptor of Medium susceptibility and Medium value would be assessed as being of Medium sensitivity.
iii) A receptor of Low susceptibility and Low value would be assessed as being of Low sensitivity.

3.3.9 However, the relationship between susceptibility to change and value can be complex and is not typically linear. For example, a receptor demonstrating High value, may demonstrate Low susceptibility to change. Equally, a receptor which is judged to be of Low value, could demonstrate High susceptibility to change. The final assessment of sensitivity is therefore one of professional judgement based on clear descriptions of susceptibility to change and value.

Susceptibility to Change

3.3.10 Susceptibility to change relates to the vulnerability of a receptor to change of the type proposed.

3.3.11 For landscape receptors, the various characteristics/factors that make up a particular landscape must be identified and consideration given as to how these will be affected by the type of change proposed.

3.3.12 For visual receptors, susceptibility to change relates to the expectations of people in different locations and engaged in different activities. This is largely determined by the category of visual receptor, e.g. resident, footpath user, road user or other.

Value

3.3.13 The value (or importance) placed upon a receptor is independent of any development proposal. Value relates to the relative value placed upon a landscape or a view by society, which is typically the subject of documentation or other evidence.

3.3.14 With specific regards to landscape receptors, the absence of a formal landscape designation does not necessarily imply that a landscape is of lower value.

Magnitude of Effect

Overview

3.3.15 The nature of the effect that is likely to occur, i.e. its magnitude, is determined by considering four separate factors, namely: scale or size; the geographic extent over which the change would be experienced; its duration; and its reversibility. These four factors are combined to derive an overall magnitude of effect for each receptor, which is determined by use of professional judgement. In accordance with Landscape Institute clarifications, the LVA treats scale/size as the primary factor. Extent, duration and reversibility are then considered as modifiers to that scale judgement.

3.3.16 The magnitude of effect has been expressed using a five-point scale of Large, Medium, Small, Negligible and No Change. Where professional judgement suggests it is required, intermediate levels of magnitude have been expressed to refine the assessment, i.e. Small to Medium or Medium to Large.

Scale

3.3.17 The scale, or size, of the landscape or visual effect likely to arise as a result of the Proposed Development is categorised as High, Medium, Low, Negligible or No Change.

3.3.18 With regards to landscape receptors, account is taken of elements that are taken away from the landscape, elements that are added to the landscape, and the degree to which this would result in a change to landscape character. The assessment therefore reflects the level of 'consistency' or 'fit' between the existing baseline characteristics of the landscape, and anything introduced into it by the Proposed Development.

3.3.19 In relation to visual receptors, consideration is given to the loss of or addition of features, and change in composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the development, the degree of contrast or integration with existing features, and the nature of the view available.

Geographic Extent

3.3.20 The geographical extent of landscape effects refers to the extent over which a change in landscape character within a landscape receptor might be experienced.

3.3.21 The geographical extent of visual effects is determined by factors including the angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor, the distance from the development, and the extent over which change in view would be visible.

Duration

3.3.22 The duration of an effect simply relates to the length of time for which it would be experienced, as follows:

i) Long-term: 10+ years; or the change could not reasonably be considered temporary in nature.
ii) Medium-term: 3-10 years.
iii) Short-term: 0-3 years.

Reversibility

3.3.23 The reversibility of an effect relates to the prospects and practicality of an effect being able to be wholly or partially reversed, or whether the change cannot realistically be reversed, i.e. it is permanent.

Level of Effect

3.3.24 Having applied professional judgement to assess the sensitivity of the baseline landscape and visual environment and to consider the magnitude of effect that the Proposed Development would cause. These are then combined using further professional judgement to consider the level of effect.

3.3.25 An LVA is not produced as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment ('EIA') process and therefore it is not necessary to identify 'significant effects.' It is however still appropriate to draw attention to any changes to landscape character or visual amenity which may be of particular note to the determining authority when considering the acceptability of a proposal.

3.3.26 The level of effect can only be defined in relation to each particular development and its specific location. It is for each LVA to determine how judgements about receptor

sensitivity and the magnitude of effect should be combined to derive the level of effect and to clearly explain how this appraisal has been made.

3.3.27 The weighting attributed to each of the six main considerations (susceptibility, value, scale, geographical extent, duration and reversibility), and the combined judgements of sensitivity and magnitude, requires the application of experienced professional judgement and may vary depending on the landscape or visual receptor or effect being assessed. This is categorised as Minor, Moderate, or Major, Negligible, or No Effect. Where professional judgement suggests it is required, intermediate levels of effect have been expressed to refine the assessment, i.e. Minor to Moderate or Moderate to Major.

3.3.28 Effects may be either Adverse (negative) or Beneficial (positive). If change occurs, with no obvious deterioration or improvement resulting, this can be said to be Neutral.

3.4 Limitations

3.4.1 There were no notable limitations to the production of this LVA.

3.4.2 The photography was undertaken during winter months when weather and light conditions are less favourable than summer months. This is sometimes evident in photography at viewpoints. However, the advantage of surveying during winter months is that trees have shed their leaves and this results in greater visibility across the landscape and a reasonable 'worst-case' appraisal of effects can be undertaken.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Baseline data for this LVA has been gathered by both desk and field based surveys. These have included reviews of landscape character assessment studies (see below) and a field visit in February 2026 to gain an understanding of the landscape and visual context of the Site and to take photographs.

3.5.2 During the Site visit, viewpoint photography was captured and the assessor gained familiarity with the wider Study Area by walking along public footpaths and walking and driving along lanes and roads.

3.5.3 Viewpoint locations were refined during the Site visit to avoid localised screening and to select camera positions to illustrate the most representative views.

3.6 Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

3.6.1 ZTV mapping has been used to help identify the extent of expected visibility of the Proposal. The ZTVs shown on **Figures 1a-1b** reflects the theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development using the maximum height of the existing building (13.4m) and the proposed stack (27m) above ground level.

3.6.2 The ZTV was produced using both a Digital Terrain Model (DTM) and a Digital Surface Model (DSM), available from the Environment Agency and the Welsh Government.

3.6.3 The ZTV produced using the DTM is based on a bare-earth model that does not reflect the presence of screening features within the landscape such as vegetation, buildings and other structures. As such, it exaggerates considerably the extent of visibility and should be read as an absolute worst-case of where visibility would be theoretically possible, rather than an accurate indication of actual visibility.

3.6.4 The ZTV produced using the DSM does reflect the presence of screening features in the landscape. Whilst still showing theoretical visibility, this type of ZTV gives a far more realistic picture of the actual extent of visibility of the Proposed Developments in the field than the DTM ZTV, but does treat vegetation as a solid feature, when in reality views can sometimes be available through leaves and branches, especially in winter. In addition, and for the avoidance of any doubt, the DSM ZTV does not reflect the presence of any proposed new planting. As such, it presents a worst-case scenario of theoretical visibility.

3.7 Viewpoint Photography

3.7.1 Viewpoint photography (and the subsequent presentation of Viewpoint Figures (**Figures 3.1** to **3.6**)) has been carried out in accordance with current best practice guidance as set out in TGN 06/19.

3.7.2 Viewpoint photography was taken using a Canon EOS 6D Mark II digital single lens reflex ('DSLR') camera with a full-frame sensor, using a 50mm lens. The camera was mounted on a tripod (Manfrotto 55) to ensure a stable support and minimise camera shake. The camera was mounted on a panoramic tripod head (Manfrotto MH057A5), which allows for the rotation of the camera at fixed intervals around a fixed point in

vertical alignment with the camera lens, thereby eliminating parallax error. The camera is levelled using a bubble spirit level and an auto-leveller device (Manfrotto 338). A wired remote shutter release was used to take each photograph, further minimising camera shake. Camera height was approximately 1.6m above the ground.

3.7.3 All photographs were taken in landscape format. Photographs were typically taken over a full 360 degree sweep from each viewpoint location. The precise location of each photograph was recorded using an Emlid Reach RS2+ GPS Receiver to give an accuracy of less than 2.5cm.

3.7.4 The full sweep of photos taken from each viewpoint were stitched together to create a single image, using the software package PTGui. The software reads the exif data attached to each individual photograph file to identify the specifications of the camera and lens, ensuring accurate production of the stitched panoramic image.

3.7.5 It should be understood that viewpoint visualisations are tools in the assessment process but independent from it. They illustrate the view in the context of a specific date, time and weather conditions, that would be seen within a photograph and not as seen by the human eye. As such, visualisations need to be used in conjunction with site visits and should be considered in the context of the totality of views experienced from the viewpoint and not just focussed on the Proposed Development.

3.7.6 Once the final viewpoint images have been produced, they are inserted into a Figure template, which also includes information about the viewpoint, including the date and time of photography, and details of the camera used.

3.7.7 The images presented on each sheet are displayed at an enlargement factor in accordance with the guidance set out in TGN 06/19. The enlargement factor is stated on each sheet.

3.7.8 The field of view displayed for each Viewpoint has been determined in accordance with the guidance set out in TGN 06/19 and is stated on each sheet.

3.7.9 Each sheet should be printed at the size stated on it. All printed sheets should be viewed held flat at a comfortable arm's length.

4.0 BASELINE

4.1 General Landscape Context

4.1.1 The Site is located 0.5km to the west of the County boundary between Wrexham and Shropshire, which also forms the national boundary between Wales and England. It is approximately 3.5km south-west of the town of Whitchurch.

4.1.2 The Site currently includes a large industrial warehouse with associated ancillary structures and a slurry bed to the north. To the south of the existing warehouse lies a small reservoir set within grassland. An access road bound by mature vegetation on either side leads to Fenn's Bank Lane to the north.

4.1.3 The topography of the Site is generally flat, with a high point of 94m AOD to the south, reducing to 90m AOD to the north.

4.1.4 The surrounding landscape is gently rolling, agricultural land bound by hedgerows and large linear belts of woodland running along watercourses. However, in closer proximity to the Site industrial land use is more prevalent, with a former landfill site adjacent to the Site. To the south of the Site is Mereside Industrial Park which houses several small commercial operators, including a local waste transfer site.

4.1.5 Other landscape features of note include Fenn's Moss, which is approximately 300m south-west of the Site and occupies a large portion of the Study Area, comprising large blocks of woodland.

4.1.6 The nearest residential properties are located approximately 200m to the south-east and comprise detached and semi-detached houses and farmsteads located along Fenn's Bank Lane.

4.2 Landscape Designations

Statutory Landscape Designations

4.2.1 There are no statutory landscape designations within the Study Area.

Non-Statutory Landscape Designations

4.2.2 WCBC maintain a non-statutory Special Landscape Area ('SLA') designation, underpinned by Policy EC5 of the UDP[12], as set out in Section 2.0. The Fenn's Mosses SLA is located approximately 0.3km south-west of the Site.

4.2.3 SLA boundaries were revised as part of preparation of the unadopted LDP[13].The designation was also renamed as SLA007: The Mosses. The boundary revision process was underpinned by a supporting document, namely the *Special Landscape Areas Study*[14], and was undertaken to comply with paragraph 6.3.12 of PPW (refer to Section 2.0)

4.2.4 The *Special Landscape Areas Study* includes a Statement of Value and Significance for SLA007 which sets the 'special valued landscape qualities and features of key importance' as follows:

"Development and management proposals in the SLA and within its landscape setting should take account of the following special valued landscape qualities

i. Small scale area vulnerable to economic and changes in agricultural land management practices and diversification.
ii. Enhance and restore lowland bog and associated habitats.
iii. Preserve peat working heritage - encourage managed public access and information dispersal.
iv. Enhance marginal habitats and diversify forestry plantation with British native species.
v. Conserve existing small field pattern and diversify existing single species forestry plantations - enhance with natural regeneration".

[12] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2005. *Wrexham Unitary Development Plan 1996-2011*
[13] Wrexham County Borough Council, adopted 2023. *Wrexham County Borough Local Development Plan 2013-2028*
[14] TACP, 2017. *Special Landscape Areas Study.* Wrexham County Borough Council

4.3 Landscape Character Context

4.3.1 LANDMAP is the formally adopted methodology for landscape assessment in Wales. The use of LANDMAP data as part of LVA is informed by Natural Resources Wales ('NRW') Guidance Note 46.[15]

4.3.2 The LANDMAP system identifies and describes the landscape in relation to five overarching layers, namely:

i) Cultural Landscape Services.
ii) Geological Landscape.
iii) Historic Landscape.
iv) Landscape Habitats.
v) Visual & Sensory Landscape.

4.3.3 The Visual & Sensory layer is the most relevant to LVA. Areas of shared characteristics, termed Aspect Areas, are identified in relation to each of the five layers.

4.3.4 It is therefore considered that the Visual & Sensory Aspect Areas defined by LANDMAP form an appropriate baseline against which the landscape character effects of the Proposed Development can be assessed. Details of each Visual & Sensory Aspect Area are available online via DataMapWales[16].

4.3.5 The Study Area also extends into Shropshire where the most relevant published guidance is the *Shropshire Landscape Typology*[17]

4.3.6 From a review of **Figures 1a-b** and **Figure 2**, the Proposed Development is most likely to result in landscape effects on the English Maelor Visual & Sensory Aspect Area and the Settled Pastoral Farmlands LCT which therefore form the focus of the landscape character appraisal.

[15] Natural Resources Wales. *Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments GN46.* Available online at: Natural Resources Wales / Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments GN46
[16] DataMapWales. https://datamap.gov.wales/maps/new?layer=inspire-nrw:NRW_LANDMAP_Visual_Sensory#/
[17] Shropshire County Council (2006) *Shropshire Landscape Typology.* Available online at: the-shropshire-landscape-typology.pdf

4.3.7 Although there is theoretical visibility from the Edge of Fenn's Moss Visual & Sensory Aspect Area, this is very minimal and unlikely to result in any change that would affect the character of the Aspect Area. Consideration of effects on the Edge of Fenn's Moss Visual & Sensory Aspect Area have thus been scoped out of the LVA.

4.4 Visual

Visual Receptors and Representative Viewpoints

4.4.1 For the purposes of this LVA, six representative viewpoints have been selected to form the basis of the visual appraisal. The viewpoints are set out in **Table 4.1**. The locations of the viewpoints are shown on **Figures 1a-b.**

Table 4.1 - Viewpoints

Viewpoint	British National Coordinates	Receptors
1. Public Footpath (BRO / 2)	350172, 339046	Footpath users
2. Public Footpath (BRO / 7)	350328, 339803	Footpath users
3. Public Footpath (BRO / 5)	350607, 338441	Footpath users
4. Public Footpath (0233/44)	351902, 338675	Footpath users
5. Public Footpath (0234/109)	352170, 339747	Footpath users
6. Maelor Way	349629, 340522	Footpath users

4.4.2 It should be noted that the viewpoint itself is not the receptor, rather it is the people that would be experiencing the view from the viewpoint. Receptors in the vicinity of the Site that are likely to experience views of the Proposed Development include:

i) Users of public rights of way, and other routes/land that are publicly accessible land.
ii) People engaged in recreation, including walking, riding, and cycling.
iii) Local residents.
iv) Road users.

4.4.3 Photography from each viewpoint is presented on **Figures 3.1** to **3.6**.

5.0 DESIGN AND MITIGATION

5.1.1 A series of measures have been identified as an inherent part of the design of the Proposed Development to reduce or eliminate potentially adverse landscape and visual effects. These are:

i) No new structures, other than the proposed stack, that would be taller than the retained existing main building.
ii) Landscape proposals that would include new native woodland and new hedgerows to increase the level of visual screening of the redeveloped Site.

6.0 APPRAISAL OF EFFECTS

6.1 Construction Phase Effects

6.1.1 Construction sites feature distinctive elements that draw attention, including temporary signage and fencing, and site operatives wearing high-visibility clothing. Construction also, by necessity, requires the use of suitable vehicles and other plant, some of which would potentially be readily apparent by virtue of their colour, form and movement. A temporary contractor's compound would be located within the footprint of the Proposed Development, which would also feature potentially visible built forms including site offices, welfare facilities, storage, etc.

6.1.2 Some visibility of construction activity would occur such as temporary cranes (if required) that would be visible above the perimeter vegetation. There would inevitably be short-term landscape and visual effects during the construction phase, however these would be temporary in duration and limited in extent and certainly no greater than the operational landscape and visual effects identified in subsequent sections of this LVA.

6.2 Landscape Effects

Landscape Character

The Proposed Development

6.2.1 The Proposed Development would comprise the redevelopment of an existing industrial facility, re-using the existing main building and introducing associated ancillary structures including the proposed stack. The new structures would be largely located within existing hardstanding, with some very localised removal of grassland vegetation. The associated landscape scheme would introduce new native trees, woodland and hedgerows, and new species diverse grassland and wet grassland, and would also include enhanced management of retained existing vegetation.

English Maelor Visual & Sensory Aspect Area

6.2.2 The Site is located within the English Maelor Visual & Sensory Aspect Area. The summary description for the Aspect Area is,:

"An attractive archetypal rolling farming landscape with elements of estate farming and a pleasant mix of small to medium field patterns and woodland blocks and copses. There is gentle variation in topography, with small wooded valleys, and higher areas overlooking the Dee valley…Field boundaries are generally well defined with mature hedges and hedgerow trees (- often oaks) and small lanes. The area feels relatively settled and safe with a low proportion of out of scale or modern development. The area forms the southern and eastern border of the county and therefore the Welsh/English border. Visually and physically the area feels far more closely associated with the English landscape of North Shropshire and Cheshire then the "typical" or "archetypal" Welsh landscape, with the result that the area feels quite separate from the remainder of the county and country and is an uncommon landscape type for Wales. The aspect is the transition zone and border between England and Wales."[18]

6.2.3 The LANDMAP data for the Aspect Area goes on to identify the following:

i) Scenic Quality: High
ii) Integrity: High
iii) Character: Moderate
iv) Rarity: Moderate.
v) Overall Evaluation: Moderate

Sensitivity

6.2.4 The key components of character within of the English Maelor Visual & Sensory Aspect Area which indicate its susceptibility to the type of changes associated with the Proposed Development include:

i) The strong presence of hedgerows and trees, combined with the gently rolling topography provides a sense of enclosure, limiting wider views of the landscape.
ii) The pleasant villages and general absence of modern development give the area 'a unique character' which increases susceptibility to change.

[18] https://landmap-portal.naturalresources.wales/view_survey.php?survey_id=10030

iii) Industrial uses at Fenn's Bank and the adjacent Mereside Industrial Park are well-established.

6.2.5 Taking these features into account, the susceptibility of this part of the English Maelor Aspect Area to the type of development proposed is considered to be Medium.

6.2.6 There are several public rights of way running through the Aspect Area, and Maelor Way long-distance path is also present. There are no landscape designations present. Designated heritage interest is very localised, and there are no nature conservation designations within the Aspect Area (within the Study Area). Value is considered to be Low.

6.2.7 Considering the susceptibility of the landscape and its value, the overall landscape sensitivity of the English Maelor Aspect Area is assessed as **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change

6.2.8 The Proposed Development would utilise an existing industrial site and existing access and would not require any notable vegetation clearance to be constructed. The part of the Aspect Area within the Study Area has a gently rolling topography with frequent woodlands and hedgerows that would enclose the Proposed Development visually and thus limit its influence upon the surrounding area. Additionally, the Proposed Development would introduce further tree, hedgerow and woodland planting which would support its integration into the surrounding landscape, helping to reduce its visibility and influence on landscape character. Woodlands and hedgerows are a strong feature throughout this part of the Aspect Area and the introduction of further planting that restores such features would help to enhance landscape characteristics. Therefore, the scale of landscape effect is considered to be Low.

6.2.9 The Proposed Development would alter a relatively small geographical area in the context of this landscape and therefore the change is considered to be Localised. The development would be a Permanent presence in the landscape, and thus effects would be Irreversible.

6.2.10 Considering all of these factors, the magnitude of change for the English Maelor Aspect Area is considered to be **Small**.

Level of effect

6.2.11 Combining all these criteria, there would be a **Minor Adverse** level of landscape effect on the English Maelor Aspect Area, due mainly to the limited increase in the influence of development at the Site, and specifically the introduction of the proposed stack. However, this would be a very localised adverse effect and would not fundamentally alter the characteristics of the Aspect Area.

Settled Pastoral Farmlands LCT

6.2.12 This LCT is located c.430 m east of the Site and largely covers the eastern extents of the Study Area.

6.2.13 The key characteristics of this LCT as are:

i) Heavy, poorly drained soils.
ii) Pastoral land use.
iii) Scattered hedgerow trees.
iv) Irregular field pattern.
v) Small to medium scale landscape.

Sensitivity

6.2.14 The key components of character within the Settled Pastoral Farmlands LCT which indicate its susceptibility to the type of changes associated with the Proposed Development are that the area is gently undulating and well enclosed by hedgerow trees and riparian woodland, limiting views.

6.2.15 Taking these into account, the susceptibility of this LCT is considered to be Medium.

6.2.16 There are public rights of way running through the LCT. There are no landscape designations present. Designated heritage interest is very localised, and there are no nature conservation designations within the Aspect Area (within the Study Area). Value is considered to be Low.

6.2.17 Considering the susceptibility of the landscape and its value, the overall sensitivity is judged to be **Medium**.

Magnitude of Change

6.2.18 The Proposed Development would not be located within the LCT. There would be localised visibility of the proposed stack, which would mostly occur at locations where the existing main building is already visible. As such, there would be a very limited increase in the established influence of industrial structures at Fenn's Bank in outward views. The underlying characteristics of the LCT would be unaffected and there would be minimal change from baseline. The scale of landscape effect is therefore considered to be Negligible.

6.2.19 The Proposed Development would alter a relatively small geographical area in the context of this landscape and therefore the change is considered to be Localised. The duration of operation would be Permanent and Irreversible.

6.2.20 Considering all of these factors, the magnitude of change for the Settled Pastoral Farmlands is considered to be **Negligible.**

Level of Effect

6.2.21 Combining all these criteria, it is considered that there would be a **Negligible** level of landscape effect on the Settled Pastoral Farmlands LCT.

Landscape Designations

6.2.22 The Proposed Development would not be located within the Fenn's Moss SLA. Whilst the DTM ZTV presented on **Figure 1b** suggests that visibility of the Proposed Development would be widespread from within Fenn's Moss SLA, the DSM ZTV on the same **Figure** (which takes accounts of the screening provided by existing vegetation) illustrates that in reality, visibility would be very limited and localised. When compared with the ZTVs of the retained existing building at the Site, which are presented on **Figure 1a**, the additional visibility of the proposed stack would be limited.

6.2.23 It is therefore not considered that the Proposed Development would result in any effects that would conflict with the wording of UDP Policy EC5, as set out in Section 4.2.

6.2.24 The revised boundary of SLA007: The Mosses would be further from the Site, and consequently less of the land within the revised boundary would fall within the ZTVs. None of the special valued landscape qualities and features of key importance that are set out in Section 4.2 would be materially affected by the presence of the Proposed Development.

6.2.25 It is concluded that the presence of the Proposed Development would not materially affect the integrity of the Fenn's Moss SLA, or the proposed revised SLA007: The Mosses.

6.3 Visual Effects

ZTV

6.3.1 The ZTV included on **Figures 1a-b** demonstrates that the visibility of the Proposed Development would be strongly influenced by the gently undulating topography of the Study Area and the strong presence of vegetation such as hedgerows, trees and woodlands. Overall, visibility of the Proposed Development would be contained to small glimpses from nearby footpaths. There would be very limited views from the Fenn's Moss SLA due to screening by woodland.

6.3.2 Visibility is indicated from Fenn's Bank Lane to the east and Ellesmere Road to the north, however boundary vegetation such as hedgerow, hedge trees and small copses will reduce the likelihood of views from receptors along these roads. Long distance glimpses may also be possible from slightly higher ground to the east of the Study Area.

Effects on Viewpoints

6.3.3 The following section identifies the residual visual effects of the Proposed Development from the six identified selected representative viewpoints. Viewpoint locations are illustrated on **Figures 1a-b**. Baseline views from each representative viewpoint are provided by **Figures 3.1** to **3.6.**

Table 6.1 – Effects on Representative Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1 – Public Footpath (BRO / 2)	
Distance and direction from the Site	0.3 km south-west of the Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	The view comprises rough grassland pasture in the foreground, interspersed with trees and bound by woodland. The existing building at the Site is clearly visible in the background of the view. A former landfill site can also be seen to the south-east, screening views of Mereside Industrial Park to the south of the Site.
Sensitivity	The focus of footpath users will be on views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change would therefore be **High.** The value attributed to the view is **Low** given that there is no designated landscape within the view, nor are there any features with recorded value. Overall, the sensitivity of the view is considered to be **Medium.**
Magnitude of visual change	**Small** The retained existing building would remain evident in the background. The proposed stack would be partially visible above the skyline, but would be a single slender structure that would not otherwise be conspicuous. The other proposed structures would be lower in height than the existing building and would not stand out. The scale of visual effect is considered to be **Low.** Geographical extent: **Localised** Duration: **Long-term** Reversibility: **Irreversible** Taking the above into account, there would be a **Small** magnitude of change from this viewpoint.
Residual level of visual effect	**Minor Adverse** The viewpoint represents **Medium** sensitivity receptors and combining this with the **Small** change to the view, the overall level of effect is judged to be **Minor Adverse**
Viewpoint 2 – Public Footpath (BRO / 7)	
Distance and direction from the Site	0.6 km north-west of the Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	The view comprises gently undulating pastoral fields bound by hedgerows and woodland. The existing building at the Site is very well

	screened by vegetation even in winter, with only glimpses available through the trees.
Sensitivity	The focus of footpath users will be on views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change would therefore be **High.** The value attributed to the view is **Low** given that there is no designated landscape within the view, nor are there any features with recorded value. Overall, the sensitivity of the view is considered to be **Medium.**
Magnitude of visual change	**Negligible** There would be filtered, long-range views of the stack from this viewpoint, with partial screening by intervening vegetation. The stack would be a single slender structure that would not otherwise be conspicuous Other proposed structures would be screened from view by vegetation. The scale of visual effect is therefore considered to be **Negligible.** Geographical extent: **Localised** Duration: **Long-term** Reversibility: **Irreversible** Taking the above into account, there would be a **Negligible** magnitude of change from this viewpoint.
Residual level of visual effect	**Negligible** The viewpoint represents **Medium** sensitivity receptors and combining this with the **Negligible** change to the view, the overall level of effect is judged to be **Negligible.**
Viewpoint 3 – Public Footpath (BRO / 5)	
Distance and direction from the Site	0.5 km south of the Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	The view comprises rough grassland pasture in the foreground bound by a lake to the north and surrounding woodlands. In the distance, the rising landform of a former landfill site screens views of the wider landscape. The existing building at the Site can be glimpsed on the horizon.
Sensitivity	The focus of footpath users will be on views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change would therefore be **High.** The value attributed to the view is **Medium** given that it is located within a Special Landscape Area. Overall, the sensitivity of the view is considered to be **Medium.**

Magnitude of visual change	**Small** The retained existing building would remain evident in the background. The proposed stack would be partially visible above the skyline, but would be a single slender structure that would not otherwise be conspicuous. The other proposed structures would be lower in height than the existing building and would not stand out.. The scale of visual effect is therefore considered to be **Low**. Geographical extent: **Localised** Duration: **Long-term** Reversibility: **Irreversible** Taking the above into account, there would be a **Small** magnitude of change from this viewpoint.
Residual level of visual effect	**Minor Adverse** The viewpoint represents **Medium** sensitivity receptors and combining this with the **Small** change to the view, the overall level of effect is judged to be **Minor Adverse.**
Viewpoint 4 – Public Footpath (0233/44)	
Distance and direction from the Site	1.3 km south-east of the Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	The view comprises gently rolling arable farmland bound by hedgerows and oak trees. The slightly elevated nature of the viewpoint allows far reaching views of the surrounding landscape which feature vast woodlands along the horizon. Residential properties along Fenn's Bank Lane can be seen between the trees in the distance. Existing structures at the Site are screened from view by a combination of landform and vegetation cover.
Sensitivity	The focus of footpath users will be on views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change would therefore be **High.** The value attributed to the view is **Low** given that there is no designated landscape within the view, nor are there any features with recorded value. Overall, the sensitivity of the view is considered to be **Medium.**
Magnitude of visual change	**Negligible** The proposed stack would be visible to the west, partially screened by intervening vegetation cover, and may break the horizon. It would however be a limited addition to the background of the view. Other structures would not be visible. The scale of visual effect is therefore considered to be **Negligible.** Geographical extent: **Localised** Duration: **Long-term**

	Reversibility: **Irreversible** Taking the above into account, there would be a **Negligible** magnitude of change from this viewpoint.
Residual level of visual effect	**Negligible** The viewpoint represents **Medium** sensitivity receptors and combining this with the **Negligible** change to the view, the overall level of effect is judged to be **Negligible.**
Viewpoint 5 – Public Footpath (0234/109)	
Distance and direction from the Site	1.5 km north-east of the Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	The view comprises gently rolling arable farmland bound by woodlands. The slightly elevated nature of the viewpoint allows far reaching views of the surrounding landscape which feature vast woodlands along the horizon. The existing buildings are very well screened by vegetation, rendering them a barely perceptible feature in the view.
Sensitivity	The focus of footpath users will be on views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change would therefore be **High.** The value attributed to the view is **Low** given that there is no designated landscape within the view, nor are there any features with recorded value. Overall, the sensitivity of the view is considered to be **Medium.**
Magnitude of visual change	**Negligible** The proposed stack would be visible to the west, partially screened by intervening vegetation cover, and may break the horizon. It would however be a limited addition to the background of the view. Other structures would not be visible. The scale of visual effect is therefore considered to be **Negligible.** Geographical extent: **Localised** Duration: **Long-term** Reversibility: **Irreversible** Taking the above into account, there would be a **Negligible** magnitude of change from this viewpoint.
Residual level of visual effect	**Negligible** The viewpoint represents **Medium** sensitivity receptors and combining this with the **Negligible** change to the view, the overall level of effect is judged to be **Negligible.**
Viewpoint 6 –Maelor Way	

Distance and direction from the Site	1.6 km north-east of the Site
Receptors	Footpath users
Baseline view	The view comprises generally flat pastoral fields bound by mature hedgerows and numerous hedge oaks, which have a combined effect of enclosing the view and preventing wider views of the landscape. The existing buildings at the Site are screened form view by vegetation.
Sensitivity	The focus of footpath users will be on views of the surrounding landscape. The susceptibility to change would therefore be **High.** The value attributed to the view is **Medium** given its position on a national trail route. Overall, the sensitivity of the view is considered to be **Medium.**
Magnitude of visual change	**Negligible** The proposed stack would be visible to the south-east, partially screened by intervening vegetation cover, and may break the horizon. It would however be a limited addition to the background of the view. Other structures would not be visible. The scale of visual effect is therefore considered to be **Negligible.** Geographical extent: **Localised** Duration: **Long-term** Reversibility: **Irreversible** Taking the above into account, there would be a **Negligible** magnitude of change from this viewpoint
Residual level of visual effect	**Negligible** The viewpoint represents **Medium** sensitivity receptors and combining this with the **Negligible** change to the view, the overall level of effect is judged to be **Negligible.**

Summary of Visual Effects

6.3.4 The analysis of ZTV mapping, field appraisal and the detailed appraisal of the six selected representative viewpoints have established that visibility of the Proposed Development would be very limited, including during winter months when deciduous vegetation is not in leaf and visibility across the landscape is at its greatest.

6.3.5 The screening effect of topography and tree cover within the Study Area would limit views throughout the Study Area. The yellow (DSM) ZTV coverage shown on **Figures 1a-b** illustrates that the additional theoretical visibility of the proposed stack

would be available from locations to the north and east of the Study Area. However field appraisal (illustrated by Viewpoints 4, 5 and 6) confirm that in reality views would be largely screened by woodland even in the winter months.

6.3.6 From the nearest residential properties located immediately east of the Site along Fenn's Bank Lane, the proposed stack and some of the other proposed structures would be glimpsed as relatively limited additions to the existing structures at the Site (notably the retained existing main building). Change in this context would be limited and would not result in any fundamental alteration to the nature of views available to residents.

6.3.7 Where views are theoretically possible from the road network within the Study Area, and from more distant properties located along these roads and within farm holdings, only glimpsed visibility of the Proposed Development through existing vegetation would occur and these receptors would have fleeting views as they pass by in cars.

6.3.8 Views from locations within wider Study Area would be very limited, with little perceptible change in views from longer distances. The Proposed Development would appear as a very limited addition and would typically be very well screened by vegetation, with only limited visibility of the top of the proposed stack likely to occur.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1.1 The Proposed Development would be introduced into a landscape context where the presence of industrial features is a well-established characteristic. It would not require the removal of notable vegetation, such as trees, and would benefit from the visual containment provided by the surrounding topography and existing tree cover. The Proposed Development would include a landscape scheme that would introduce new woodland, new hedgerows, and new species-diverse grassland to the Site, and would also provide enhanced management of existing vegetation.

7.1.2 In reaching these conclusions, it is also important to emphasise that the Proposed Development would not introduce a new or uncharacteristic land use into the surrounding landscape, nor would it extend industrial influence into areas where it is not already established. The appraisal has demonstrated that landscape and visual effects arise solely from a limited and incremental change to an existing industrial baseline, with no engagement of new landscape receptors and no material alteration to the defining characteristics of the receiving landscape.

7.1.3 The influence of the Proposed Development upon the character of the surrounding landscape would be no greater than minor adverse. The key characteristics of the landscape would not be compromised by the proposed changes, and the landscape would remain predominantly rural, with the well-established influence of industrial structures at the Site maintained.

7.1.4 Visual effects would also be no greater than minor adverse. Whilst the proposed stack would be taller than the retained existing main building, it would be a single slender structure that would not be especially prominent when seen from the surrounding area. Other proposed structures would be very well screened by vegetation, and where visible would also be seen in the context of the larger existing building.

7.1.5 The Proposed Development would not compromise the integrity, special qualities or valued characteristics of any designated or undesignated landscapes, including the Fenn's Moss Special Landscape Area. Visibility would be limited, localised and largely filtered by existing landform and vegetation, and the proposed development

would be read in the context of existing built and industrial elements rather than as a new or intrusive feature in the landscape.

7.1.6 The assessment has been undertaken on a precautionary basis, considering the maximum operational height of the proposed stack, winter vegetation conditions, and worst-case theoretical visibility. Even under these conservative assumptions, effects are consistently assessed as no greater than minor adverse, and in most cases negligible. This confirms that the scale, extent and perceptibility of change would remain well within the capacity of the surrounding landscape and visual environment to accommodate it.