

**Abergavenny Velo Park Masterplan**  
Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment  
November 2020

**DRAFT**

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|--|------------------------------|------------------|---------|
| <b>ELEMENT</b><br>URBANISM & LANDSCAPE | Abergavenny Velo Park - LVIA |                  |         |
|  | SCALE: n/a                   | DATE: 12-11-2020 | Rev: 01 |

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# 1.0 Introduction

This study has been undertaken in order to assess the landscape and visual impacts associated with the introduction of a Closed Road Cycling (CRC) facility and associated infrastructure, on a 6.4 ha site at Racecourse Farm, Llanfoist. The site is located directly to the south of the A465 and approximately 1.5 miles south of Abergavenny Town Centre.

The assessment is intended to inform and guide the emerging development proposals and to support the design of effective landscape mitigation. It is submitted to Monmouthshire County Council as a standalone document in conjunction with the scheme planning application.

Pre-application discussions have been held with Monmouthshire County Council and subsequently the methodology for this study has been agreed with the Landscape Officer along with the selection of viewpoints selected for assessment and the definition of Local Landscape Character Areas.

## 2.0 Proposed Development

The development proposals as illustrated opposite comprises the provision of a closed road cycle track (CRC) and associated infrastructure, set within an open and attractive landscape which is easily accessible for both the local community and wider area. The proposal would provide a permanent new home for local cycling clubs and would support coaching and cyclist development within the local area. It would also provide a hub for cycling events and competition and generate additional potential as a venue for wider community activities.

Integral to the proposals and the CRC provision would be the establishment of a robust landscape framework which would strengthen existing Green Infrastructure (GI) assets, help to soften views of the new track and associated grading works, and accommodate circulation and surface water drainage features within a naturalised setting. Accordingly, the alignment of the CRC has been developed to limit impact on existing GI assets and to retain a landscape buffer around the boundary of the site. Except for a small group of category C trees in the centre of the site which are to be removed, all existing trees and hedgerows have been retained. In addition a 10m exclusion buffer has been established around the existing pond habitat and within this zone no grading, walls or hard surfacing would occur.

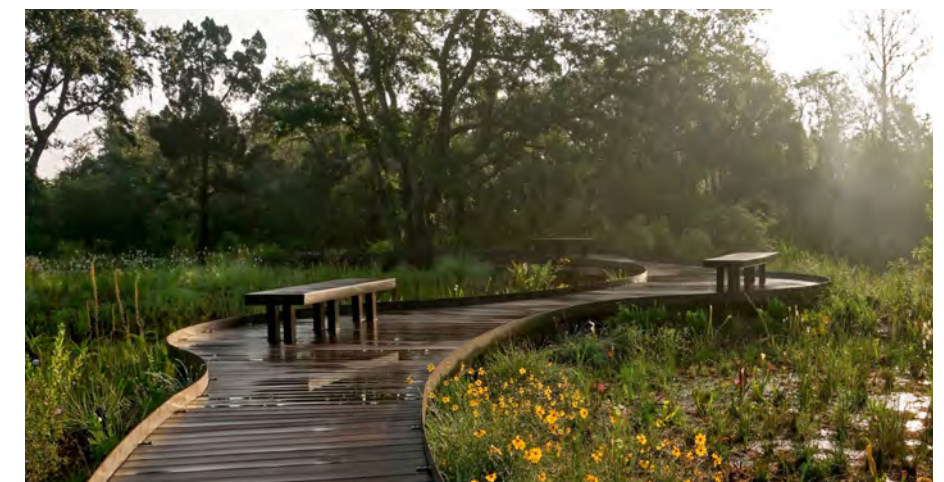
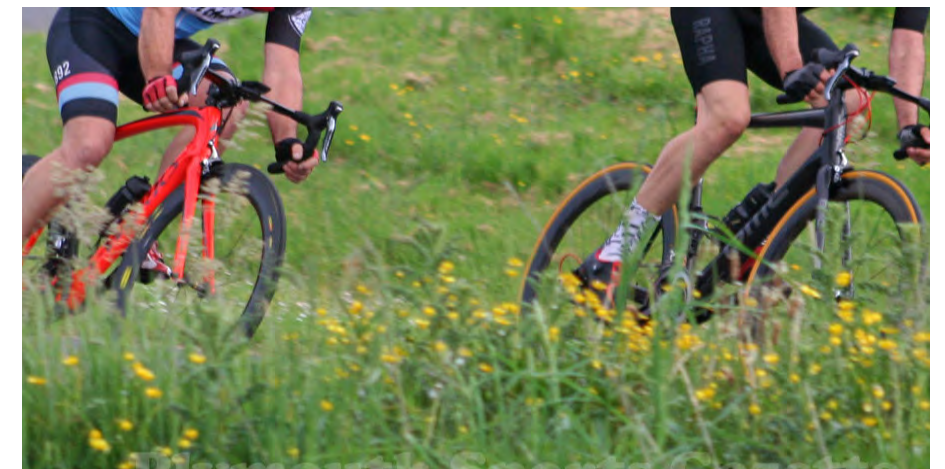
The cycle track itself would be 1km long, surfaced in non-permeable asphalt and set out in a 'figure of 8' which provides a variation of road gradients and incorporates a 100m straight to competition standard. Part of the track would be lit to allow evening use. Detailed modelling has been undertaken in order to minimise cut and fill within a folding landscape and to site the track as close as possible to existing grade, rising from low points in the north and south of the site (49.0m & 47.0m AOD respectively), to a high point of 58.5m AOD in the centre of the site. A series of cuttings and embankments would be required and mostly achieve a maximum gradient of 1:3 with localised 1:2 grades. The interface between the embankments and the existing ground profile has been softened by 'feathering in' of contours and with the introduction of wildflower meadows across the slopes.

In addition to the protection of the site's existing GI assets, a series of structural enhancements would be undertaken as detailed below;

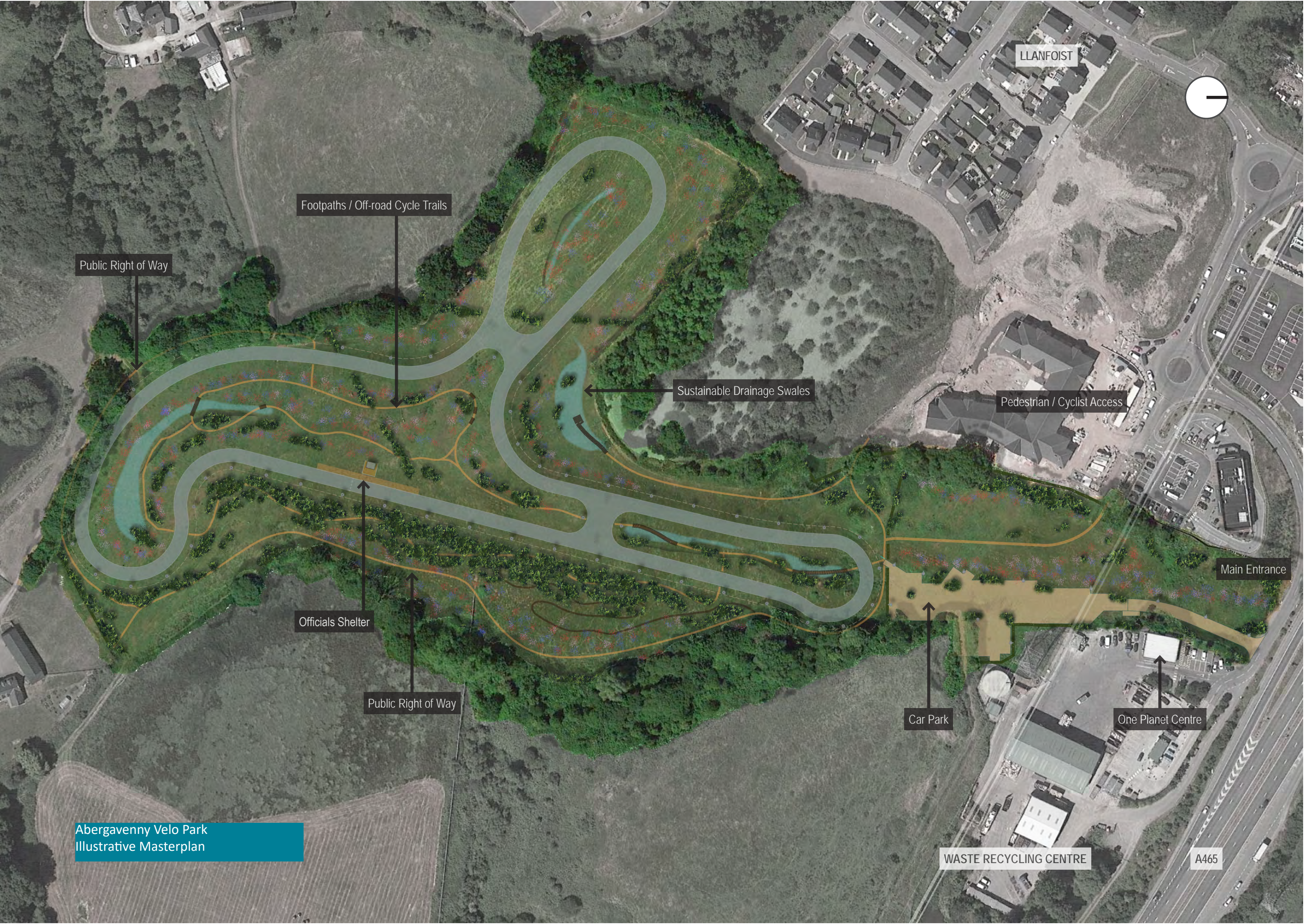
- Native infill planting would be established as necessary in order to strengthen the site's boundary hedgerows, protect connectivity and provide a continuous filtering of views from the surrounding areas, particularly the Nursing Home and the higher ground which rises to the south.
- Although overhead power lines constitute a constraint to tree planting along the recycling centre boundary, low native hedge and scrub planting would be encouraged to form a stronger northern GI corridor and linkage to vegetation along the A465.
- Native planting would also be undertaken where possible within the main body of the site to strengthen internal GI infrastructure and create a new north/south linkage.
- Wildflower margins would be established along the boundaries of the site and would act as an interface between boundary hedgerows and active visitor and cyclist areas. These margins would provide a net diversity gain over amenity grass.
- In order to maximise safe access for visitors and the local community to experience the wetland habitat, it is proposed to construct a raised boardwalk around part of the pond, which once constructed would sit above ecological assets. A method statement for the boardwalk construction would be developed in liaison with the project ecologist.

- Rainfall runoff would be collected and conveyed in existing and proposed ditches and attenuated in shallow basins. New basins would be contoured to form a 'natural' appearance as far as possible, with localised 'scrapes' introduced in the lowest zones, preventing an incongruous 'flat base'. Appropriate meadow mixes would be sown across the basins ensuring species tolerant of varying environmental conditions. Additional species diversity would be introduced into the damper 'scrapes'.

Two existing public rights of way cross the site and it is proposed to realign a short section of the north/south footpath as part of the proposals. It is also proposed to improve the legibility and linkages between the housing area and the PROWs crossing the site through vegetation clearance and management. The existing footpath which passes Llanfoist Fawr Primary School would be unaffected.







LLANFOIST



Footpaths / Off-road Cycle Trails

Public Right of Way

Sustainable Drainage Swales

Pedestrian / Cyclist Access

Main Entrance

Officials Shelter

Public Right of Way

Car Park

One Planet Centre

WASTE RECYCLING CENTRE

A465

Abergavenny Velo Park  
Illustrative Masterplan



# 3.0 Baseline: Landscape Planning Context

The site is located close to a number of sensitive landscapes, designated to protect scenic beauty, nature conservation and heritage assets.

However, the site itself lies against the 20th century urban edge. The northern part of the site in particular is in poor condition with few features of interest. The development would provide an opportunity to strengthen existing green infrastructure assets, provide sustainable linkages (with the local PROW network and World Heritage Site, and encourage active recreation.

## National Planning Background

### One Wales: One Planet (2009)

This document sets out the sustainable development scheme for Wales, promoting sustainability as an overarching principle for future development.

### Wales Spatial Plan: People, Places, Futures 2008

The Wales Spatial Plan helps to deliver the priorities set out in One Wales: One Planet 2009. In relation to the consideration of future development, Chapter 12. Valuing our Environment, includes the following extract:

*“The quality of our environment is a fundamental asset for its intrinsic value, and for our economy and quality of life. By safeguarding and enhancing both the natural and built environment we will attract people to and retain them within our communities and preserve the foundations for the future.”*

The site is located within the SE Wales Capital Region, an extract of which states:

*“19.41 Each town and city needs to foster its own distinct sense of identity, building on its heritage and culture to create a network of settlements with real character which complement each other and each add strength to the attractiveness of the region as a whole. Recognising the value of the Area’s diversity of landscapes, built environments and distinctive communities will be key to building confidence and helping to market a regional offer for inward investment and for tourism.”*

### Planning Policy Wales 2018

Chapter 3: Strategic and Spatial Choices Extracts state that:

*“Good design can help to ensure high environmental quality. Landscape and green infrastructure considerations are an integral part of the design process. Integrating green infrastructure is not limited to focusing on landscape and ecology, rather, consideration should be given to all features of the natural environment and how these function together to contribute toward the quality of places.”*

The following extracts provide guidance in relation to character:

*“3.9 The special characteristics of an area should be central to the design of a development. The layout, form, scale and visual appearance of a proposed development and its relationship to its surroundings are important planning considerations. A clear rationale behind the design decisions made, based on site and context analysis, a strong vision, performance requirements and design principles, should be sought throughout the development process and expressed, when appropriate, in a design and access statement.*

*3.10 In areas recognised for their particular landscape, townscape, cultural or historic character and value it can be appropriate to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness. In those areas, the impact of development on the existing character, the scale and siting of new development, and the use of appropriate building materials (including where possible sustainably produced materials from local sources)”*

Chapter 6: Distinctive and Natural Places provides guidance for local planning authorities in relation to landscape character as follows:

*“Characteristics of Local Landscapes : 6.3.11 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/ 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.”*

## Technical Advice Notes

The Welsh Government provides Technical Advice Notes (TANs) to cover specific topics in more detail and the following may be considered pertinent to the Proposed Development:

TAN 12 Design states:

*“The local context comprises the characteristics and setting of an area in which a development is located. This includes the area’s natural and human history, the forms of settlements, buildings and spaces; its ecology and archaeology; its location and the routes and waterways that pass through it. Understanding the site and its immediate and wider context is the basis for a meaningful and sustainable design response.”*

*“4.11 Appraisal of the landscape should focus on its quality in terms of geology and geomorphology, vegetation and habitats, visual and sensory quality and historic and cultural quality. “LANDMAP” is one method of assessment which has the potential to provide a framework and information base from which good design and management can be developed.”*

TAN 24 Historic environment

This TAN reinforces the need for careful consideration and discussions with the local authority regarding the setting of the World Heritage Site at Blaenavon, and the need for reference to its current World Heritage Site Management Plan. It states:

*“1.26 It is for the applicant to provide the local planning authority with sufficient information to allow the assessment of their proposals in respect of scheduled monuments, listed buildings, conservation areas, registered historic parks and gardens, World Heritage Sites, or other sites of national importance and their settings. These principles, however, are equally applicable to all historic assets, irrespective of their designation. For any development within the setting of a historic asset, some of the factors to consider and weigh in the assessment include:*

- The significance of the asset and the contribution the setting makes to that significance;*
- the prominence of the historic asset;*
- the expected lifespan of the proposed development;*
- the extent of tree cover and its likely longevity; and*
- non-visual factors affecting the setting of the historic asset such as noise.”*

*“3.14 The impacts of proposed development on the Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage Site and its setting and, where it exists, the World Heritage Site buffer zone, is a material consideration when determining planning applications.”*

**Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Management Plan 2018-2023**

The site lies approximately 400m to the northeast of the northernmost edge of the World Heritage Site, with the closest feature of the World Heritage Site located at Llanfoist Wharf. Within the management plan, Box 2.1- Statement of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) states:

*“The area around Blaenavon is evidence of the pre-eminence of South Wales as the world's major producer of iron and coal in the 19th century. All the necessary elements can still be seen - coal and ore mines, quarries, a primitive railway system, furnaces, workers' homes, and the social infrastructure of their community.”*

No buffer zone for the World Heritage Site is currently identified however, it states under ‘Caring for the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape’:

*“Consider options for a proposed Buffer Zone/or other defined setting for the Site to ensure that potential threats from inappropriate development in the setting of the Site to its OUV are adequately controlled by effective Local Development Plan Policies.”*

**Local Planning Background**

**Monmouthshire County Council Adopted Local Development Plan 2014**

**Policy S13 Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment** states that proposals must:

- “1. Maintain the character and quality of the landscape by:*  
*(i) identifying, protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing the distinctive landscape and historical, cultural, ecological and geological heritage, including natural and man-made elements associated with existing landscape character;*  
*(ii) protecting areas subject to international and national landscape designations;*  
*(iii) preserving local distinctiveness, sense of place and setting;*  
*(iv) respecting and conserving specific landscape features, such as hedges, trees and ponds;*  
*(v) protecting existing key landscape views and vistas.*

- 2. Maintain, protect and enhance the integrity and connectivity of Monmouthshire’s green infrastructure network.*  
*3. Protect, positively manage and enhance biodiversity and geological interests, including designated and non-designated sites, and habitats and species of importance and the ecological connectivity between them.*  
*4. Seek to integrate landscape elements, green infrastructure, biodiversity features and ecological connectivity features, to create multifunctional, interconnected spaces that offer opportunities for recreation and healthy activities such as walking and cycling.”*

**Policy S17 – Place Making and Design** states that:

*“Development shall contribute to creating high quality, attractive and sustainable places. All development proposals must include and promote high quality, sustainable inclusive design which respects local distinctiveness, respects the character of the site and its surrounding in order to protect and enhance the natural, historic and built environments and to create attractive, safe and accessible places.”*

**Policy LC1 New Built Development in the Open Countryside** states in the following extract that:

*“There is a presumption against new built development in the open countryside, /and new built development will only be permitted where all the following criteria are met:*  
*a) the proposal is satisfactorily assimilated into the landscape and complies with Policy LC5;*  
*b) new buildings are wherever possible located within or close to existing groups of buildings;*  
*c) the development design is of a form, bulk, size, layout and scale that respects the character of the surrounding countryside; and*  
*d) the development will have no unacceptable adverse impact on landscape, historic / cultural or geological heritage, biodiversity or local amenity value.”*

**Policy LC2 Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site** states that:

*“Development within or, in the vicinity of, the Blaenavon World Heritage Site will only be permitted where it would: a) preserve or enhance the landscape setting; and b) have no serious adverse effect on significant views into and out of the World Heritage site.”*

**Policy LC3 Brecon Beacons National Park** states that:

*“Development in the vicinity of the Brecon Beacons National Park will only be permitted where it would: a) preserve or enhance the landscape setting, as defined through the LANDMAP process; b) have no serious adverse effect on significant views into and out of the National Park.”*

**Policy LC5 Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character** states that:

*“Development proposals that would impact upon landscape character, as defined by LANDMAP Landscape Character Assessment, must demonstrate through a landscape assessment how landscape character has influenced their design, scale, nature and site selection. Development will be permitted provided it would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the special character or quality of Monmouthshire’s landscape in terms of its visual, historic, geological, ecological or cultural aspects by:*  
*a) Causing significant visual intrusion;*  
*b) Causing significant adverse change in the character of the built or natural landscape;*  
*c) Being insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape;*  
*d) Introducing or intensifying a use which is incompatible with its location;*  
*e) Failing to harmonise with, or enhance the landform and landscape; and /or*  
*f) Losing or failing to incorporate important traditional features, patterns, structures and layout of settlements and landscapes of both the built and natural environment.”*

**Policy GI1 Green Infrastructure** states that:

*“Development proposals will be expected to maintain, protect and enhance Monmouthshire’s diverse green infrastructure network by:*  
*a) Ensuring that individual green assets are retained wherever possible and integrated into new development. Where loss of green infrastructure is unavoidable in order to secure sustainable development appropriate mitigation and/or compensation of the lost assets will be required;*  
*b) Incorporating new and /or enhanced green infrastructure of an appropriate type, standard and size.”*

**Policy EP1 Amenity & Environmental Protection** states that: *Development proposals should have regard to the privacy, amenity and health of occupiers of neighbouring properties. Development proposals that would cause or result in an unacceptable risk /harm to local amenity, health, the character /quality of the countryside or interests of nature conservation, landscape or built heritage importance” ““will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that measures can be taken to overcome any significant risk”:*

**Policy EP3 Lighting** states that:

*“Development including proposals for external lighting should include an appropriate lighting scheme to ensure:*  
*a) lighting is necessary for the development;*  
*b) the proposed lighting is the minimum required;*  
*c) light spillage is minimised;*  
*d) the prevention of glare and respect for the amenity of neighbouring land uses;*  
*e) the visual character of the built and natural environment is not unacceptably affected and dark skies are retained where appropriate; and*  
*f) potential impacts on biodiversity are taken into consideration.”*

**Policy MV3 Public Rights of Way** states that:

*“Development that would obstruct or adversely affect a public right of way will not be permitted unless satisfactory provision is made which maintains the convenience, safety and visual amenity offered by the original right of way and this will be reflected in the layout and conditions / obligations on any permission granted. Proposals to improve or create public rights of way will be permitted where they add to the utility and enjoyment of the network, including providing missing links in otherwise continuous routes, upgrading paths to bridleways or enhancing the green infrastructure network, provided they give rise to no unacceptable amenity or environmental impacts and comply with legislative requirements. Such proposals should be designed with the convenience, safety and visual amenity of users in mind and should also take into account the needs of those with limited mobility, the impact on the adjoining rights of way network and connectivity of that network.”*

**Policy DES1 General Design Considerations** states that:

*“All development should be of a high quality sustainable design and respect the local character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire’s built, historic and natural environment.”*

The policy goes on to provide a number of specific considerations for design development.

*“Development proposals will be required to:*  
*a) ensure a safe, secure, pleasant and convenient environment that is accessible to all members of the community, supports the principles of community safety and encourages walking and cycling;*  
*b) contribute towards sense of place whilst ensuring that the amount of development and its intensity is compatible with existing uses;*  
*c) respect the existing form, scale, siting, massing, materials and layout of its setting and any neighbouring quality buildings;*  
*d) maintain reasonable levels of privacy and amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties, where applicable;*  
*e) respect built and natural views and panoramas where they include historical features and / or attractive or distinctive built environment or landscape;*  
*f) use building techniques, decoration, styles and lighting to enhance the appearance of the proposal having regard to texture, colour, pattern, durability and craftsmanship in the use of materials;*  
*g) incorporate and, where possible enhance existing features that are of historical, visual or nature conservation value and use the vernacular tradition where appropriate;*  
*h) include landscape proposals for new buildings and land uses in order that they integrate into their surroundings, taking into account the appearance of the existing landscape and its intrinsic character, as defined through the LANDMAP process. Landscaping should take into account, and where appropriate retain, existing trees and hedgerows;*  
*j) achieve a climate responsive and resource efficient design. Consideration should be given to location, orientation, density, layout, built form and landscaping and to energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, including materials and technology;*  
*k) foster inclusive design;*



Policy DES2 Areas of Amenity Importance states that:

“Development proposals on areas of amenity importance will only be permitted if there is no unacceptable adverse effect on any of the following:

- a) the visual and environmental amenity of the area, including important strategic gaps, vistas, frontages and open spaces;
- b) the relationship of the area of amenity importance to adjacent or linked areas of green infrastructure in terms of its contribution to the character of the locality and / or its ability to relieve the monotony of the built form;
- c) the role of the area as a venue for formal and informal sport, general recreation and as community space, expressed in terms of actual usage and facilities available, as well as its relationship to general open space requirements as set out in policy CRF2;
- d) the cultural amenity of the area, including places and features of archaeological, historic, geological and landscape importance; and
- e) the nature conservation interest of the area, through damage to, or the loss of, important habitats or natural features (policy NE1 applies)”

Policy NE1 Nature Conservation Protection & Development states that:

Development proposals shall accord with nature conservation interests and will be expected to:

- i) Retain, & where appropriate enhance, existing semi-natural habitats, linear habitat features, other features of nature conservation interest & geological features and safeguard them during construction work;
- ii) Incorporate appropriate native vegetation in any landscaping or planting scheme, except where special requirements in terms of purpose or location may dictate otherwise;
- iii) Ensure the protection and enhancement of wildlife and landscape resources by appropriate building design, site layouts, landscaping techniques and choice of plant species;
- iv) Where appropriate, make provision for on-going maintenance of retained or created nature conservation interests.

Policy RE6 Provision of Recreation & Tourism states that:

Development proposals for recreation, tourism and leisure uses in the countryside will be permitted provided that they are of a small-scale, informal nature and subject to detailed planning considerations,including adequate safeguards for the character and appearance of the countryside (particularly its landscape, biodiversity and local amenity value).

Supplementary Planning Guidance

The Green Infrastructure Strategy (SPG) March 2019.

This document provides more detailed information on Monmouthshire’s Green Infrastructure assets and opportunities and is intended to support the Local Development Plan.

In regard to the area surrounding the site, the document sets out existing GI assets including The River Usk corridor and floodplain, the overgrown pond adjacent to the eastern boundary, the smaller ponds south of the site and pockets of trees.

Within the Key Opportunities schedule, the document notes that the A465 acts as a Green Infrastructure corridor and highlights the potential for the northern section of the site to contribute as a ‘Habitat Connectivity Opportunity’.

Within the Potential Placemaking GI Requirements schedule, the following could be considered to relate to the site as a result of it’s location on the urban fringe of Llanfoist ‘opening up access to natural green-scape.’

A project specific Green Infrastructure Strategy has also been carried out in support of the development proposals and should be read in conjunction with this document.

Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study

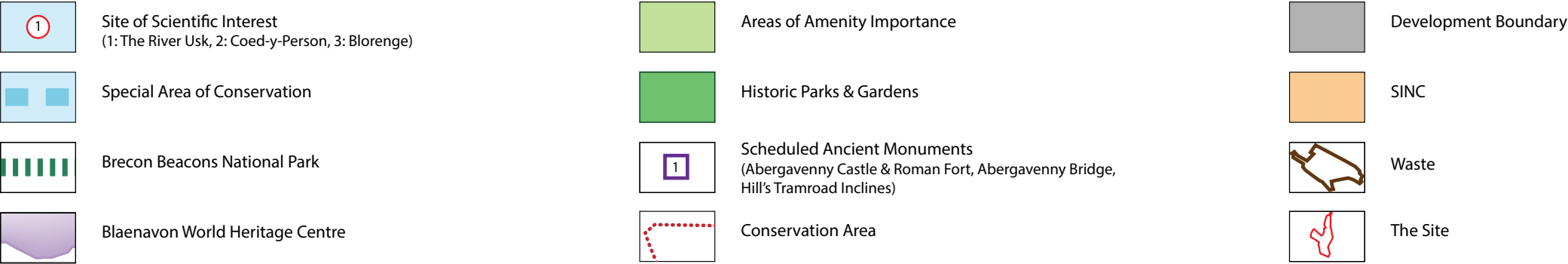
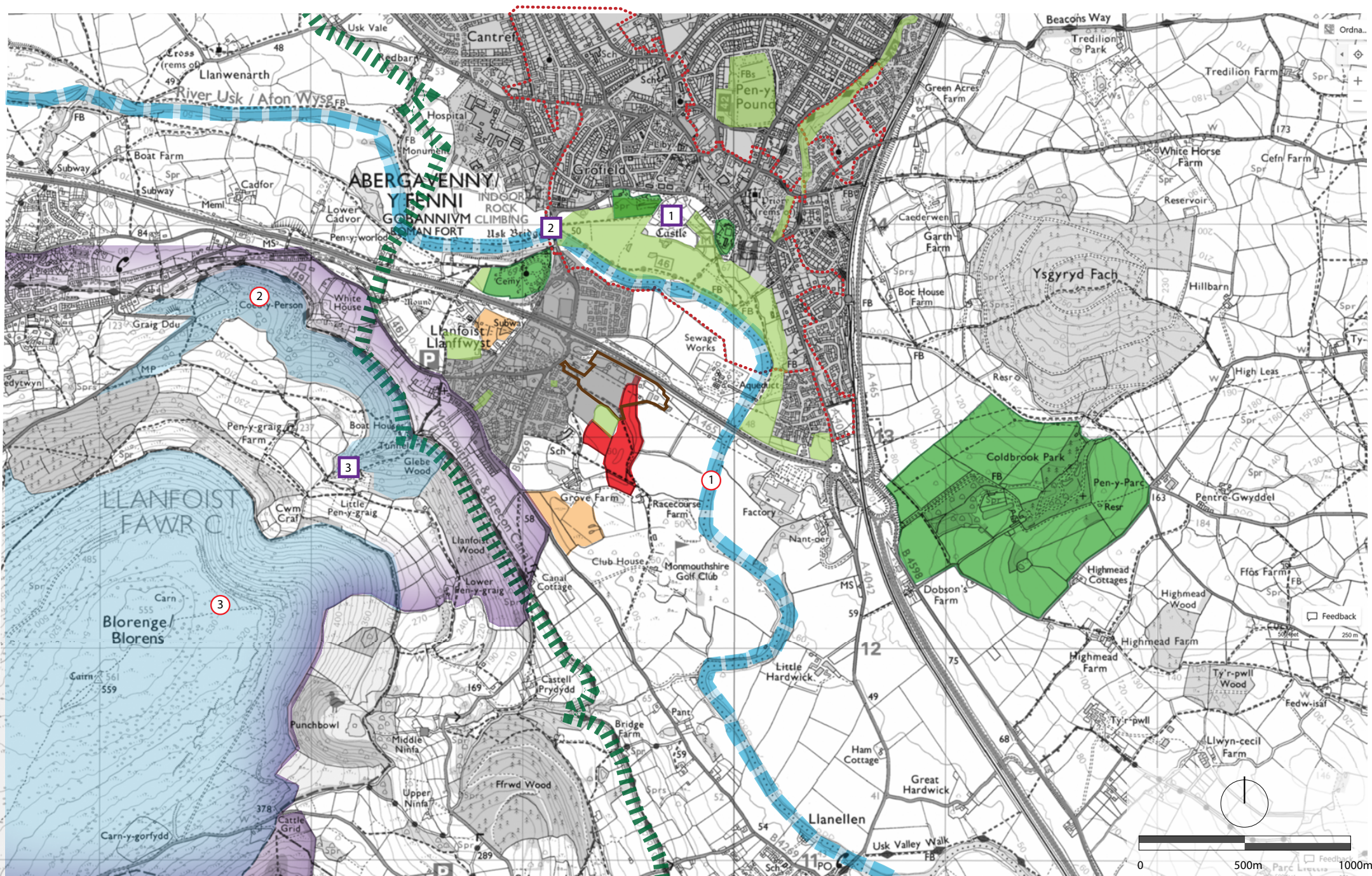
Refer to section 6.0 Landscape Character for further details.



|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Boundary | 4. The Hill Historic Park & Garden         |
| 2. Usk Valley Walk   | 5. Cresta Road Recreation Ground           |
| 3. Public Right of Way   | 6. Cricket Ground                          |
| 4. Brecon Beacons National Park                                | 7. Bailey Park                             |
| 5. Woodland  | 8. New Cemetery Historic Park & Garden     |
| 6. Main Watercourse/ Water Body                                | 9. Castle Meadows                          |
|  | 10. Coed-Y-Person Woodland                 |
|  | 11. Ysgyryd Fach Woodland                  |
|  | 12. Coldbrook House Historic Park & Garden |
|  | 13. Blorenges SSSI                         |



Abergavenny Velo Park  
Landscape Planning Context





# 4.0 Baseline: The Site & Context

In broad terms the land at Racecourse Farm (the site) is located within the low lying, landscape which sits just above the floodplain of the River Usk, adjacent to the urban edges of Llanfoist and Abergavenny and the transport corridors of the A465 and A40. The wider surrounding landscape includes the upland areas of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.

The site is situated 1.5 miles south of Abergavenny Town Centre and immediately adjacent to the eastern edge of Llanfoist and the southern edge of the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road. The Llanfoist junction is directly alongside to the north. The River Usk runs parallel to the eastern boundary of site, beyond two lower floodplain fields, and of particular note is the incongruous man-made landform of the Llanfoist landfill embankment which sits between the site and the floodplain and rises some 15m from the adjacent floodplain level. To the south, two farmhouses, Racecourse Farm and Grove Farm, sit within a rolling network of fields defined by boundary hedgerows, which merges into the semi-ornamental landscape of Monmouthshire Golf Course. Collectively, this landscape extends to meet the lower slopes of the Blorengge.

The site covers an area of approximately 6.4ha and is managed as grazing land which is subdivided into smaller paddocks. The topography is heavily undulating with a localised high point in the centre of the site which falls both north and south and most notably to the site boundary with the landfill site where the ground rises up again sharply, creating a steep low valley alongside the boundary. (Refer to Existing Conditions Plan)

To the west of the site is a mixed-use area which has been developed in recent years to accommodate new housing, a residential nursing home and roadside leisure/retail operators including a hotel, restaurant, and drive through restaurant. An overgrown pond sits alongside the central point of the western boundary and the site wraps around the edge of the pond and extends westwards to meet the playground of Llanfoist Primary School.

The northern end of the site extends in narrow strip towards the A465 and is flanked by the Drive Thru to the west and the Llanfoist Household Waste Recycling Centre and One Planet Education Centre to the east. Vehicular access is possible from the road which serves the Recycling Centre at a point just west of the recycling centre and One Planet Education Centre access, although no formal entrance currently exists.

Apart from the man-made topography of the Llanfoist landfill site, the eastern boundary opens out to the low-lying areas of the River Usk floodplain and although the A465 and substation intersect the landscape, there is a visual connection beyond to open countryside. This open landscape wraps around to the south where the fields and Golf course extend to meet the lower slopes of the Blorengge.

A number of utility constraints cross the site including high voltage overhead power cables which bisect the northern part of the site (a pylon sits directly east of the site), a foul sewer which crosses site in a north-south and east-west alignment and a 12m wide gas easement which crosses the site along a north-south axis.

Existing Vegetation/GI of note consists primarily of native boundary hedgerows interspersed with hedgerow trees, together with a small group of Category C trees including an over-mature ash in the centre of the site and a mature Category A Oak adjacent to the Care Home. The majority of the site’s hedgerows are unmanaged

and have become over-mature and gappy. The remainder of the site consists of semi-improved grassland with areas of encroaching scrub, particularly in the north.

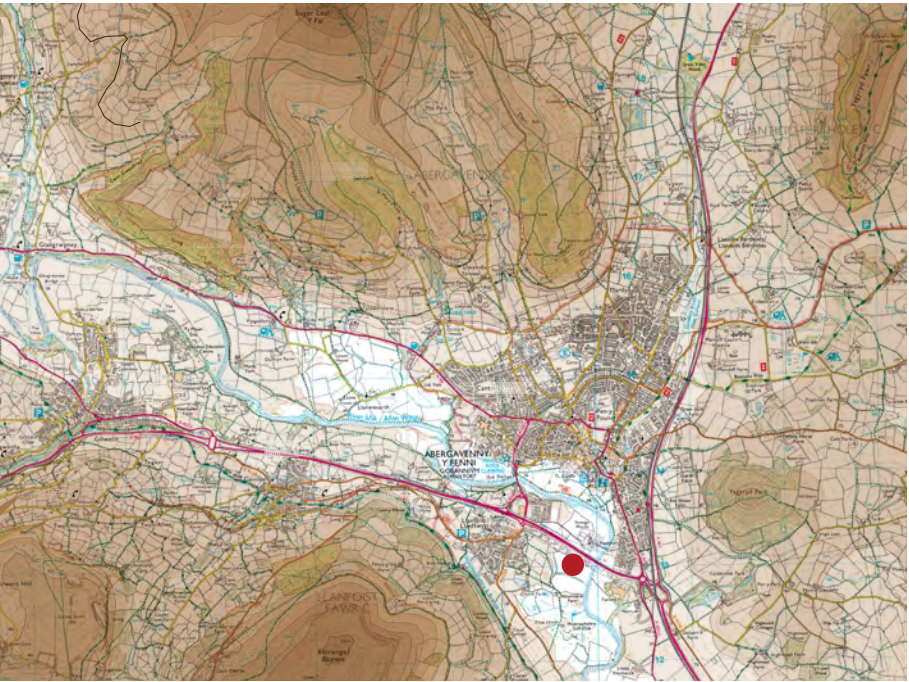
Several boundary lines have no vegetation, in both the northern and southern parts of the site. The site’s boundary with the recent care home development is marked by a post and rail fence and although the new Drive-Thru restaurant has a thin belt of boundary landscaping, it is unlikely to be managed for wildlife and wider landscape interest.

The site has been the subject of a tree survey which was carried out in March 2020 and a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which was carried out in July 2019. The tree survey noted the following:

*“Within the immediate vicinity of the site there are a number of significant Green Infrastructure Assets including the overgrown pond habitat to the west with its associated trees and marginals, two small ponds within the adjacent farms and several mature trees along the boundaries of the floodplain fields to the east”.*

Two Public Rights of Way cross the site. A north/south footpath enters site between the northern edge of the pond and the new Care Home and runs in a south easterly direction towards Racecourse Farm and beyond to cross Monmouthshire Golf Course. A second footpath runs in a broadly east west direction passing the southern boundary of the Llanfoist Fawr Primary School and continuing to cross the site and join with the north/south footpath at Racecourse Farm. Currently a dense bank of brambles along the site boundary blocks the footpath at the Care Home.

The site is not currently the subject of any national or local designations or Tree Preservation Orders. Ongoing ecological surveys are being carried out at this time.



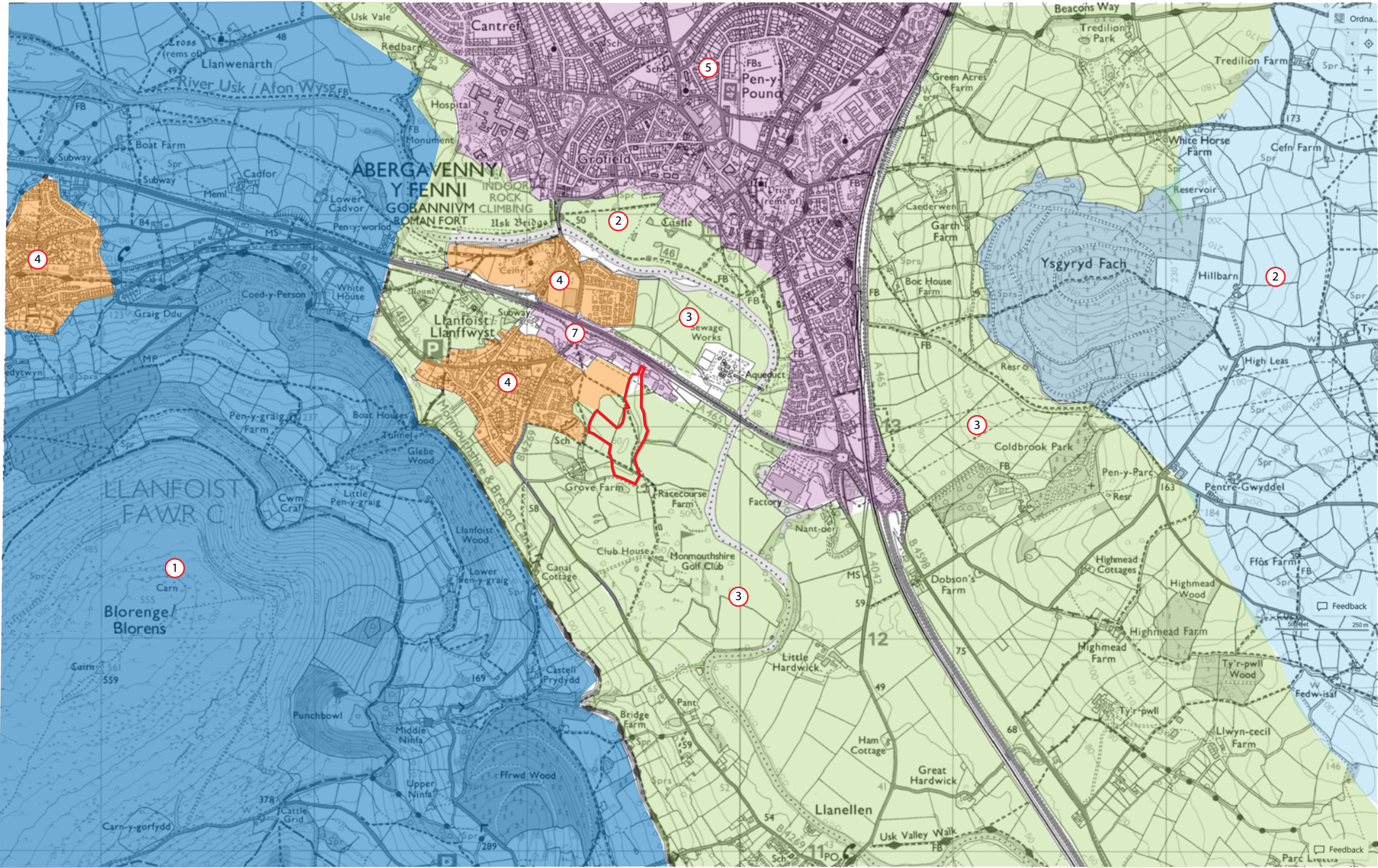
Site Location Plan







Abergavenny Velo Park: Lighting Conditions Plan



- 1

Unlit Area
- 2

Dispersed Settlement Low Brightness Area (screened by topography)
- 3

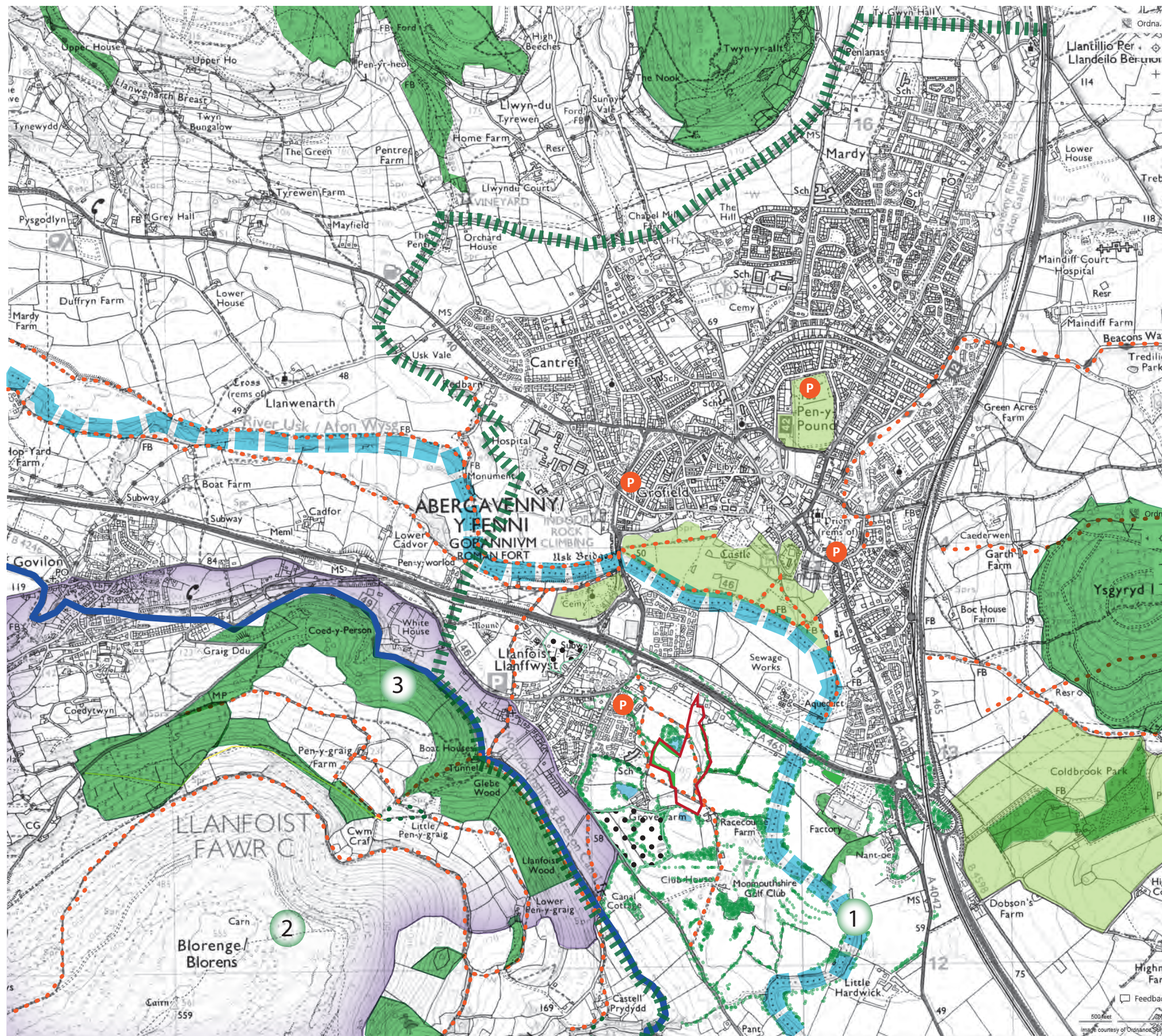
Dispersed Settlement Low Brightness Area





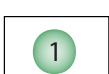






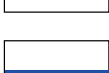
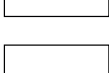
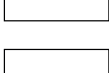

- 4

Suburban Medium Brightness Area
- 5

Urban High Brightness Area
- The Site





-  Application Boundary
-  Large woodland areas
-  Areas of Amenity Importance (Monmouthshire)
-  Historic Parks and Gardens
-  Site of Special Scientific Importance  
1 The River Usk; 2 Coed-y-Person; 3 The Blorenges
-  The River Usk  
Special Area of Conservation
-  Blaenavon World Heritage Centre
-  Public Right of Way
-  Site of Importance for Nature Conservation
-  Brecon Beacons National Park Boundary
-  Play Areas
-  Monmouthshire & Brecon Canal
-  Earth Centre
-  Grove Farm SINC
-  Notable trees with Veteran status or bat roosting potential

## Abergavenny Velo Park Green Infrastructure Assets Plan



# 5.0 Baseline: Landscape Character

## Wider Landscape Character Areas

National Resources Wales have identified 48 National Landscape Character Areas (NLCAs), defined by at a broad landscape scale throughout Wales. The descriptive profiles distinguish one landscape from another, with reference to their regionally distinct natural, cultural and perceptual characteristics. The site lies within NLCA 31 Central Monmouthshire, close to its western extents, with NLCA 37 South Wales Valleys to the west and NLCA 30 Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains to the north.

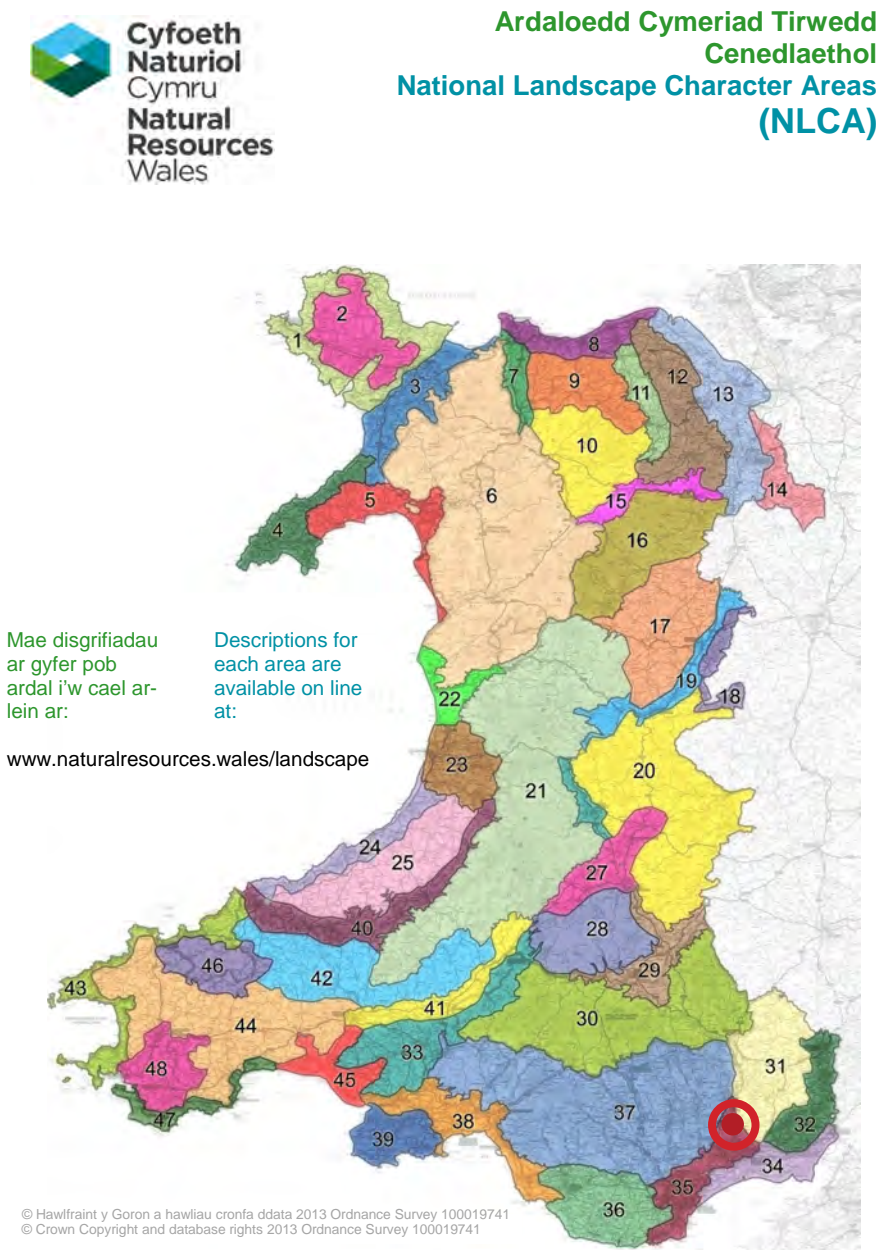
Key characteristics identified for NLCA 31 are as follows:

- “Silurian mudstones and shales surrounded by a large band of earlier, Devonian Old Red Sandstone
- An area of gently rolling hills, intervening valleys and the Usk flood plain.
- Morainic deposits and fertile alluvial flood plains aligning with geological faults, especially to the north. Post-glacial alluvium across the Usk flood plain.
- The Usk, the main watercourse, flows south from Abergavenny and eventually becomes tidal. Rivers Trothy and Monnow in the north feed into the Wye in the adjacent character area to the east. Their alignments are influenced by geological faults.
- Hedge-bound fields are mainly given to sheep grazing and dairying, with areas of arable farming on the fertile floodplain.
- Woodlands and mixed plantations cover many slopes and hill tops in parts of the area.
- Mixed habitats, notably mixed broadleaved woodlands containing a variety of rare tree species and are important habitats, as is the open water of the Llandegfedd Reservoir - a key site for overwintering birds.
- Small nucleated hamlets and villages are scattered throughout the area, linked by a network of winding rural lanes. Medieval stone churches are characteristic of the villages.
- The historic market town of Abergavenny sits on the banks of the Usk in the west of the area, against the striking backdrop of the Blorenge and Sugar Loaf Mountain.
- Grosmont, Skenfrith, White, Raglan and Usk castles are distinctive monuments and witnesses to the area’s contested past.
- The sheltered landscape has a peaceful rural character, with any significant modern intrusion confined to the road corridors of the A40 and A 449.”

Regarding Abergavenny the description states:

“The principal settlement is Abergavenny, located at the gateway separating this lowland landscape from the upland landscapes to the west. It is a busy market town which has significantly expanded in the 20th century beyond its original historic core.”

Whilst the site and its surrounding landscapes reflect many of these characteristics, the site is not a tranquil landscape with a ‘peaceful rural character’. Its location on the edge of the A465 corridor with noise and visual influences from traffic, the nearby settlement at Llanfoist, and urban edge features of Abergavenny, all influencing character.





LANDMAP

LANDMAP is the national landscape information system in Wales, providing a layered approach to landscape appraisal as an aid to decision-making. The characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape have been mapped as a series of aspect layers; Geological Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic Landscape and the Cultural Landscape. The aspect areas in which the site is located are as follows:

- Geological Landscape (Area ID: MNMTHGL040 Usk-Nant y Wilcae)

Classification: Active lowland river-flood plain system

“Major mature river system. Higher part from W of Abergavenny towards Usk with well developed meander system, with local abandoned meanders on wide floodplain (e.g. W og Llanvihangel Gobion). NW of Usk floodplain narrower and cut into broad marginal terrace forms and then opening up south of Usk as a very broad N-S basin up to around 1.5 km across. To the south course narrows slightly and heads SW towards Caerleon with a wide floodplain and very well developed meander belt marking the County boundary. Includes the Nant y Wilcae tributary which branches NE of Usk and also includes remarkably wide floodplain/depositional basin areas south of Raglan and a tributary in the S leading from the Llandegfedd reservoir. Rarity / Uniqueness: Low (No notable sites/landforms recorded and geomorphology typical of feature/process and not known to be exceptional or is widespread). Overall Evaluation: Moderate (No notable sites/landforms recorded and geomorphology typical of feature/process and not known to be exceptional or is widespread.)”

- Geological Landscape (Area ID: MNMTHGL044 Llanfoist)(West of Site)

Classification: Other

“Broad, locally gently uneven terrace-like feature formed mainly of fluvioglacial sand and gravel on the S side of the Usk valley between Gilwern and N of Llanover. Includes several areas of significant urban development. Rarity/Uniqueness Low (No notable sites/landforms recorded and geomorphology typical of feature/process and not known to be exceptional or is widespread.) Overall Evaluation: Moderate (No notable sites/landforms recorded and geomorphology typical of feature/process and not known to be exceptional or is widespread.)”

Other aspect areas are consistent across the site as follows;

- Landscape Habitat (Area ID: MNMTHLH121 River Usk's floodplain)

Classification: Improved Grassland

“Semi-natural Broadleaved Woodland (3%), Improved Grassland (74%), Arable (16%), Buildings (1%) and Amenity Grassland (1%) Connectivity/Cohesion: High (The River Usk provides connectivity as an important wildlife corridor). Overall Evaluation: Moderate (Evaluated as moderate for habitats and high for species, on balance moderate is felt to be the most accurate evaluation).”

- Visual & Sensory (Area ID: MNMTHVS045 Lower Usk Valley)

Classification: Flat Open Lowland Farmland

“An open flat riparian landscape, overlooked by steep scarp slopes and hills west of the A449(T). It forms the floodplain for the River Usk and Olway Brook which meander in broad swathes across the flat valley floor, creating spurs and ox-bow lakes. The land cover comprises of medium to large-scale fields of permanent pasture and arable crops interspersed with enclaves of unimproved and semi-improved grassland, bounded by low, intensively managed hedgerows and often replaced by post and wire fencing. Linear tree belts, and lines of willow and alder follow the river and stream courses. Mature individual field trees and parkland are also characteristic of this landscape towards the most southern point. Settlement is limited to small-scale nucleated villages located just above the edge of the floodplain with estates and

large farmsteads on steeper slopes. There are few roads which cross the floodplain other than at Newbridge on Usk and the A472. Scenic Quality: High (An attractive flat open landscape focused on the rivers with an attractive backcloth of hills and scarp slopes.). Character: High (The area has a distinct and strong sense of place as an extensive valley floor focused on the sinuous River Usk and Olway Brook.). Overall Evaluation: High (An attractive flat open landscape focused on the rivers with an attractive backcloth of hills and scarp slopes. The area is generally in good condition with consistent character throughout, unspoilt on the valley floor by intrusive development. The area has a distinct and strong sense of place as an extensive valley floor focused on the sinuous River Usk and Olway Brook. Extensive flat valley floor is very rare in Monmouthshire.)”

- Historic Landscape (Area ID: MNMTHHL061 Usk Valley)Classification:

Irregular Fieldsapes (Evaluation: High)

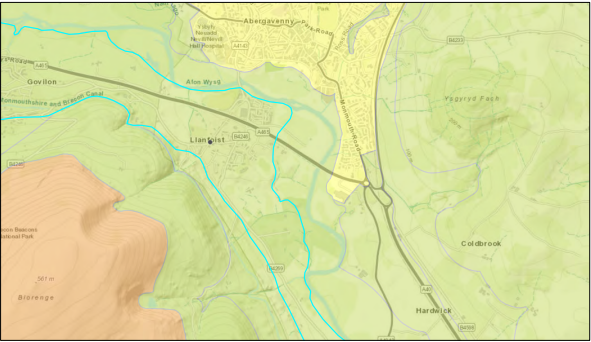
“The Usk River Valley, a largely agricultural area made up predominantly of irregular fieldscapes, with a variety of settlement types. The Usk Valley has functioned since the prehistoric era as a natural communication route between the coastal lowlands of Gwent and the uplands of Powys and later as a political frontier, marking the division between the early medieval Welsh kingdoms of Gwynllwg and Gwent. In view of its evident importance, it is not surprising that the Usk Valley is a well settled, multi-period landscape, with evidence of occupation dating back to the Mesolithic period. The evolving course of the river has meant that a significant amount of these archaeological remains have been buried under deep alluvial soils. Significant quantities of Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age and Iron Age artefacts have been identified in various locations along the Usk Valley. However there is a marked absence of prehistoric ritual or settlement sites recorded within this area, only a limited number have been identified to date, including a Bronze Age standing stone to the E of Llanybi (Children & Nash, 1996) and a pair of Bronze Age round barrows and an associated circular double-ditched feature at Llanvihangel Gobion (Mein, 1996, 64). However, excavations at Trostre Castle in the mid-1990s have revealed evidence of continuous occupation on the site extending from the Mesolithic period through to the late Iron Age (Mein, 1993, 52; Mein 1996, 64). It may well be that the deep alluvial coverage has prevented the identification of more prehistoric sites within the floodplain of the Usk by means of aerial photography and that many more remain to be identified through field survey and excavation. There is evidence for significant Roman military activity along the Usk Valley, with the establishment of forts at Abergavenny, Usk and, subsequently, Caerleon, which appear to have formed part of a scheme which brought Gwent under effective Roman control.

Overall Evaluation: High (Given that the area scores high in terms of integrity, survival, condition and potential and is outstanding in terms of its rarity, the area has been assessed as having an overall evaluation of at least high... This is in spite of recent road building schemes...).”

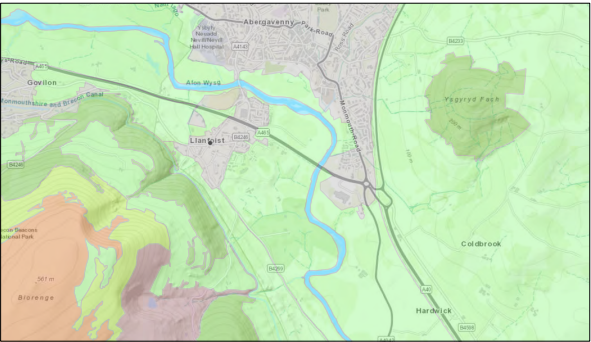
- Cultural Landscape (Area ID: MNMTHCL047 Lower Usk River Valley)

Classification: Other Rural (Evaluation: High)

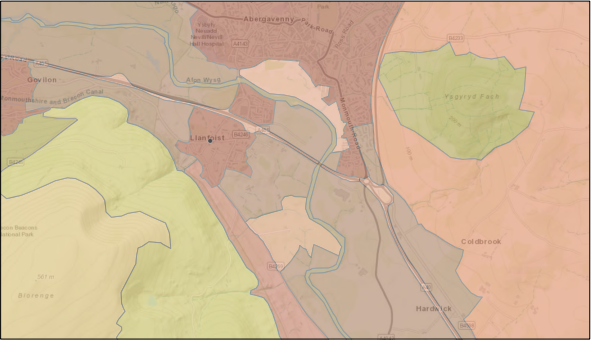
“The Lower Usk River Valley is predominantly rural, with agriculture as the primary industry: lowland flood-plain pasture nearest to the meandering course of the river with mixed farming on the rising ground. The area defined is also remarkable for the high number (10) of designed landscape parks recorded on the Register of Landscapes Parks and Gardens, together with the uncounted number of estates and estate houses present in the landscape, some of which are listed, most of which contribute to the perception of the wealth of their occupants and owners over time. Land use has built upon the strategic importance of the river, with Roman fortifications at Caerleon (adjacent to the Study Area), Usk and Abergavenny, reinforced by Norman castles. The river was valuable as a communications route from the sea at Newport since the Roman period, being tidal up to Newbridge-on-Usk. In the 20th century, the development of the Usk Valley Walk has added a new cultural dimension, complementing its centuries-long use as a game-fishing destination. The gentle countryside is scattered with many small attractive villages linked, because of the devious ways of the river, by a good number of mediaeval bridges. The biggest threat to this tranquillity is the possibility of dredging the river for aggregates. Overall Evaluation: High (High as a surviving multi-period evolved landscape of exceptional attractiveness).”



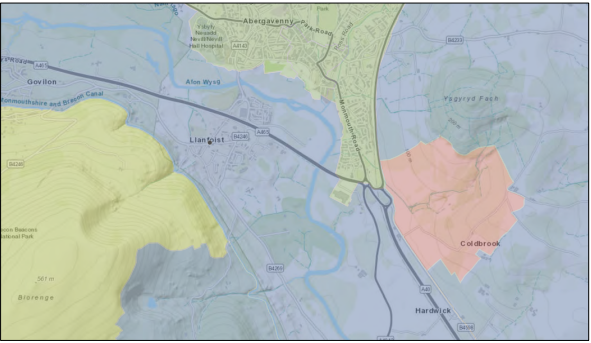
- LandMap Geological Landscape
- Lowland hills and valleys
  - Man-made
  - Mountain and upland valley



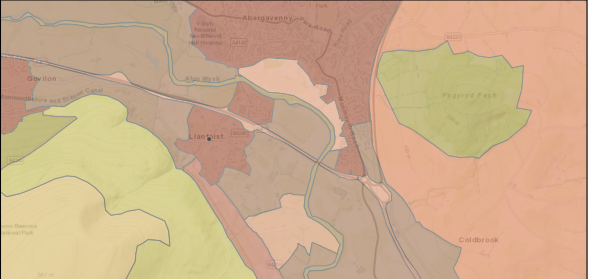
- LandMap Landscape Habitats
- Built Up Areas
  - Grassland & Marsh
  - Heathland
  - Mosaic
  - Open Water
  - Tall Herb & Fern
  - Woodland & Scrub



- LandMap Visual Sensory
- Built Land
  - Developed Unbuilt Land
  - Exposed Upland/Plateau
  - Flat Lowland/Levels
  - Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes
  - Inland Water (Including Associated Edge)
  - Lowland Valleys
  - Rolling Lowland
  - Upland Valleys



- LandMap Historic Landscape
- Designed
  - Extractive
  - Irregular Fieldscapes
  - Nucleated Settlement



- LandMap Cultural Landscape Services
- Built Land
  - Developed Unbuilt Land
  - Exposed Upland/Plateau
  - Flat Lowland/Levels
  - Hills, Lower Plateau & Scarp Slopes
  - Inland Water (Including Associated Edge)
  - Lowland Valleys
  - Rolling Lowland
  - Upland Valleys



Monmouthshire Landscape Assessment (2001)

Within this document, the site is located within Landscape Character Area (LCA) 36 ‘Upper Usk Valley’. This Character Area contained the following key descriptions:

- *The Usk is a rare example of a large lowland river that has not been subject to significant modification by man, therefore unspoilt retains its integrity as the focus of the character area.*
- *an open flat riparian landscape of high scenic quality with pleasing patterns.*
- *The river Usk which meanders in broad swathes across the flat valley*
- *Linear tree belts, and lines of willow and alder follow the Usk river and other stream courses and enclose the pleasant rural landscape of pastoral and arable land. Mature individual field trees, parkland and orchards are also typical of this landscape.*
- *The river and the surrounding floodplain have a clear sense of place defined by the land-form, land cover and surrounding distinctive landscape of the Bloreng and Sugar Loaf.*
- *Settlement and access more prevalent in this stretch of the river north of the town of Usk*
- *The valley benefits from views to adjacent higher ground including the Bloreng which also affords views of the valley itself.*

Monmouthshire Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2009)

Within this document, the site lies within a high/medium sensitivity area. Of the area surrounding the site, the document notes;

“ *The mosaic of woodland and small pastures have positive intrinsic qualities providing a transition from valley floor to the upland of the Bloreng*”

Brecon Beacons National Park Management Plan 2015-2020

The following extract from the management plan reinforces the importance of local landscape character.

(65) “*The National Park provides a great diversity of landscapes, which have been documented in the Park’s Landscape Character Assessment. The landscape is a valuable asset and the primary reason for National Park designation.*”

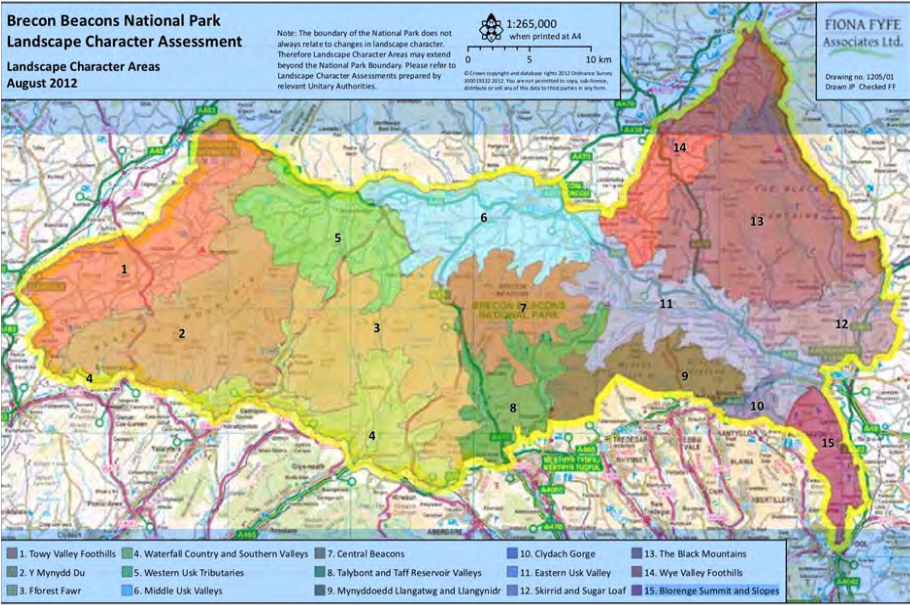
Within the National Park Landscape Character Assessment, the site lies adjacent to Landscape Character Area (LCA) 15. Bloreng Summit and Slopes, to the west. LCA 11. Eastern Usk Valley lies to the north west of the site, however, there would be little inter-visibility due to topography and therefore no extracts of this LCA are included. To the north of Abergavenny town lies LCA 12. Skirrid and Sugarloaf.

The summary description for LCA 15. Bloreng Summit and Slopes is stated as:

“*The slopes of this LCA have an exceptionally timeless and peaceful quality and a sense of being rarely visited. Scattered farms are linked by deep lanes lined with exposed tree roots and flower-rich banks, whilst the Bloreng moorland ridge provides a contrasting backdrop and sense of orientation. From the ridge there are panoramic views. The landscape has a rich industrial history (particularly apparent at the popular recreation site of Goytre Canal Wharf) and lies partially within the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site.*”

The overall strategy for LCA 15 is stated as:

“*To retain the area’s peaceful character, long views and special qualities whilst celebrating its rich heritage. Farming is supported, with traditional practices such as common grazing and hedgerow maintenance encouraged. Woodland, plantations and upland moorland are well managed, increasing their biodiversity. The heritage of the area is understood, valued and visited by local people and visitors, but without damage to its historic features or undeveloped character.*”



Landscape Character Areas of the Brecon Beacons National Park

The summary description for LCA 12. Skirrid and Sugarloaf is stated as:

“*The distinctive pointed summit of Sugar Loaf and landslip cleft of Skirrid are prominent landmarks over a wide area, including Abergavenny, the eastern end of the Usk valley and surrounding uplands. They provide popular walking routes for visitors and local people, affording panoramic views over the surrounding valleys, Somerset and the Bristol Channel, the Malvern Hills and across to the Black Mountains. Their open moorland contrasts with the surrounding lower land, which is characterised by farmland, woodland and deep flower-rich lanes.*”

The overall strategy for LCA 12 is stated as:

“*To enhance the settings of the area’s distinctive landforms, ensuring that the special qualities of upland peaks and surrounding valleys are retained and enhanced. Traditional management of upland commons, woodlands and farmland is encouraged. The historic features and landscapes of the area are maintained in good condition. Long views from high land are not affected by visually-intrusive development. Discreet visitor management enables high numbers of visitors to enjoy popular routes without damage to sensitive habitats or features.*”

Project Specific Local Landscape Character Areas

The landscape character assessment outlined above has been carried out at national and regional level and is useful as reference for context. However, as recommended in GLVIA3, it is necessary to analyse landscape character at the project specific level to understand how the development site relates with its immediate surroundings.

Accordingly, a project specific landscape character assessment has been undertaken for the landscape within approximately 1km of the Racecourse Farm site, against which landscape effects are assessed.

The 7 Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCAs) identified in relation to the Racecourse Farm Site are illustrated opposite. Their key characteristics and resultant sensitivity to the proposed change are set out over the following pages.

Local Landscape Character Area 1: Infrastructure Corridor

This Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) comprises the narrow zone of land which runs alongside the southern and eastern boundaries of Abergavenny and contains the A40 and A465. The area is defined by both dual carriageways and associated embankments, vehicle noise and signage, but also by significant service infrastructure. Pylons, floodlighting masts, industrial complexes including the sewage treatment works and recycling centre, and the distinct man-made embankments of the capped landfill site dominate, so that the LLCA cuts across the riparian lowlands which surround it

Also included in this LLCA are the newly constructed hotel, restaurant and fast food outlets, which through their scale, accompanying signage and aspect, associate with the adjacent dual carriageway.

This LLCA contains a mixture of highly lit and low brightness areas. Tall lighting masts surround roundabout junctions and the recycling plant, and fast food outlet have elevated signage, car park lighting and glazed well lit restaurants. In between these areas are unlit lengths of dual carriageway. The most obtrusive light is emitted from the floodlighting surrounding the recycling centre and the elevated food outlet signage and lighting adjacent to the site. The roundabout lighting is mostly contained within mature tree lines.

Although this LLCA is well-defined by its components, the Infrastructure corridor itself is divided by an almost continuous line of native vegetation which runs alongside the A465 road corridor, so that in summer months the visual connection between the road corridor and the adjacent industrial areas is significantly reduced.

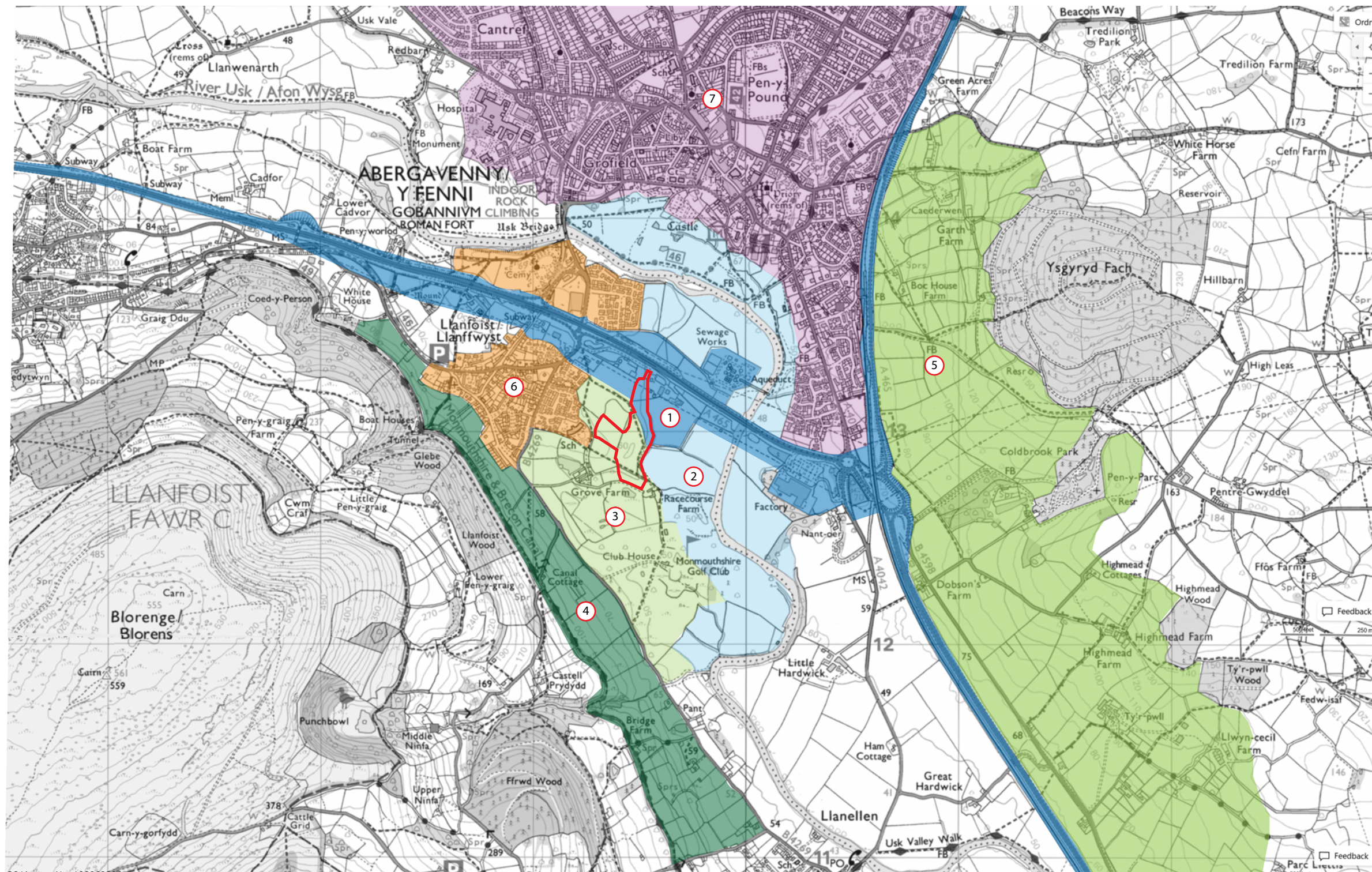
The northern part of the site is considered to sit within this character area.

As a consequence of the many visual detractors which dominate this LLCA including large-scale infrastructure, built form, engineered embankments, overhead masts and services, together with the high levels of background noise, it is considered that the area’s sensitivity to the type of change proposed by the development is VERY LOW.

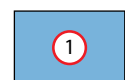




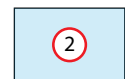
## Abergavenny Velo Park: Local Landscape Character Areas



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Local Landscape Character Area 1 : Infrastructure Corridor



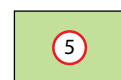
Local Landscape Character Area 2 : River Usk Riparian Meadows



Local Landscape Character Area 3 : Llanfoist Lowlands



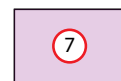
Local Landscape Character Area 4 : Lower Blorenge Slopes



Local Landscape Character Area 5 : Lower Ysgyryd Fach Slopes



Local Landscape Character Area 2 : Llanfoist Urban Area



Local Landscape Character Area 3 : Abergavenny Urban Area



The Site





Local Landscape Character Area 2: River Usk Riparian Meadows

An open, flat landscape which is predominantly managed as pastoral fields defined by hedgerow boundaries. Within this landscape the meandering course of the River Usk is well defined by a line of trees along the river’s edge and a strong visual connection exists with the upland topography which surrounds it.

LLCA2 forms a small part of the wider “continuum of unspoilt rural river corridor” as noted in Monmouthshire Sensitivity and Capacity Report and within this report the area is given a high/medium landscape sensitivity value. The visual unity of the area in the vicinity of the site has been fragmented over time with the introduction of the dual carriageway, sewage works and landfill embankment, as well as more recent mixed development focused around the Usk Bridge.

This LLCA is largely an unlit, 'low brightness' environment typical of a sparsely populated rural area although parts of the LLCA are affected by obtrusive light from neighbouring LLCA1 (Infrastructure Corridor) and LLCA7 (Abergavenny Urban Fringe).

The interrelationship between the development site and this LLCA is considered to be limited to the parcel south of the A465 as a result of the A465. Although the LLCA does not have protection status, is fragmented and has limited interrelationship, it is still considered that the area’s sensitivity to the type of change proposed by the development remains HIGH as a reflection of the intrinsic value of the floodplain area and the unique relationship between the river corridor and adjacent nationally recognised landscapes.



Local Landscape Character Area 3: Llanfoist Lowlands

This character area consists of the open, rolling agricultural landscape situated immediately above the River Usk floodplain comprising a mixture of semi-improved grassland punctuated by farmsteads, native hedgerows, occasional trees, ponds and the more manicured landscape of Monmouthshire Golf Course. Two public rights of way cross this LLCA and connect Llanfoist with the lower slopes of the Bloreng.

Although the character area sits alongside the A465 corridor and the urban edge of Llanfoist, it is separated from built form by intervening vegetation, hedgerows, wetlands and playing fields, so that the fields retain a semi-rural character, although the A465 is audible. The golf course, although manicured, blends into the LLCA through it’s native trees and less intensively managed fairways. For the majority of the LLCA there are open views across the surrounding landscape. Only from lower elevations close to the overgrown pond and within the heavily treed fairways of the golf course is there is a more 'introverted' character with truncated views.

This LLCA is largely an unlit, 'low brightness' area typical of a sparsely populated rural area although parts of the LLCA are affected by obtrusive light from the adjacent suburban Llanfoist (LLCA6) and the A465 corridor (LLCA1).

It is considered that the main body of the site, with its subdivided grazing areas and heavily folded topography, sits within this character area, although as noted earlier, the northern part of the site with more unkempt scrub and ruderal vegetation, forms part of the adjacent Infrastructure Character Area LLCA1.

On balance, considering that the LLCA is a locally valued open area with two PROW’s linking across to the wider countryside, but also taking into account the influence of the A465, recycling centre and man-made landfill site and the buffering effect of the boundary hedgerows which provide a level of physical separation between the immediate site and the wider lowland area, it is considered that the area’s sensitivity to the type of change proposed by the development is MEDIUM.



Local Landscape Character Area 4: Bloreng Lower Slopes & Goytre Canal-side

Rising sharply from the Llanfoist lowlands, the lower slopes of the Bloreng are predominantly pastoral with hedge lined fields, scattered farmsteads and steep narrow lanes characterised by dense overhanging trees and herbaceous embankments.

The Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal cuts across the lower slopes of this LLCA, reflecting the rich industrial heritage of the area and creating a natural long-distance footpath route. From both the canal and the narrow lanes, an almost continuous tree line serves to limit views outward to the wider landscape so that from both access routes there is a close enclosed character.

Conversely, from the public rights of way that cross the open farmland adjacent to the lanes, there are open views to the north, becoming more panoramic from higher ground. These open and wide ranging views exert an influence, creating a sense of ‘exposure’. As a result, the landscape character across the LLCA varies from enclosed to exposed, dependent on the level of vegetation coverage.

This LLCA is largely an unlit, 'low brightness' area typical of a sparsely populated rural area. There is a visual interrelationship with the high brightness urban areas of Abergavenny and Llanfoist which the elevated LLCA4 overlooks.

Taking into account that a good proportion of the character area is enclosed in nature and that for those remaining elevated and 'exposed’, the site exerts a relatively small influence towards the sense of exposure, but also noting that a part of this LLCA is within the Blaenavon World Heritage Site, it is considered that the Bloreng Lower Slopes and Brecon and Monmouthshire Canal-side Character Area’s sensitivity to the type of change proposed would be HIGH.





Local Landscape Character Area 5: Ysgyryd Fach Lower Slopes

The A465 dual carriageway forms a continuous boundary to the eastern side of Abergavenny and marks an abrupt transition between the town and the agricultural land which surrounds it. The land to the east of the A465 is predominantly a network of dispersed farmsteads set within mixed arable/pasture fields which are well defined by hedgerow boundaries and small woodland belts. There is limited public accessibility from the A465 and the majority of the farmsteads are accessed via private lanes. These narrow routes are less visible within the landscape so that the LLCA appears as a continuous belt of well treed agricultural land rising from the A465 towards the wooded upper slopes of Ysgyryd Fach. A number of public footpaths cross the LLCA linking the urban area with the summit of Ysgyryd Fach.

A strong tree belt along either side of the A465 creates a robust visual barrier between the character area and the built form of Abergavenny. As a result, from within the LLCA the landscape character is distinctly rural rather than urban fringe, despite the proximity of the town. Even in the higher areas to the east where there is a visual connection with the town, the views are set within a broader panoramic view including the Bloreng, the Sugar Loaf and the wider Brecon Beacons National Park. The A465 is audible across the LLCA which acts as a detractor from the rural character.

This LLCA, with its isolated farmsteads is largely an unlit 'low brightness' environment typical of relatively uninhabited rural areas. There is a visual interrelationship with the high brightness urban area of Abergavenny which the elevated LLCA5 overlooks.

From the lower slopes and from the wooded upper slopes, there is no visual interrelationship between this LLCA and the site or the Llanfoist Lowlands (LLCA3).

The Ysgyryd Fach Lower Slopes Character Area is considered rural in nature with limited urbanising influences apart from the audible A465 and glimpses of cars through vegetation which would suggest a medium sensitivity value. However, as a consequence of the very limited visual interrelationship between the character area and the site, it is considered that the sensitivity to the type of change that would be introduced by the development is VERY LOW.



Local Landscape Character Area 6: Llanfoist Urban Area

The predominantly residential area of Llanfoist sits either side of the A465 and forms two distinct 'sub' character areas as a result. The smaller, northern area is closely related with the River Usk bridge and floodplain. Although predominantly residential, it also contains a public house and supermarket. The larger area to the south of the A465, is more closely related to the Bloreng and those floodplain areas physically separated from Abergavenny, with PROW’s leading from the LLCA across the site towards the floodplain. This area contains several key community facilities including the village hall and Llanfoist Fawr Primary School and a number of longer established businesses including car showrooms and a garden centre. The development site sits directly alongside this LLCA.

Both sub-areas have seen mixed development in recent years including food retail, hospitality and housing. As a result, the Llanfoist urban area has developed a varied character with a mixed age housing stock. Within the more established housing areas there is generally a ‘leafier’ character with mature trees and large front gardens, often with hedged or low wall boundaries.

This LLCA is a well lit 'medium brightness' suburban environment, although the outer edges which overlook open fields are considered 'lower brightness' areas.

Within the housing areas, views are often truncated by intervening buildings so that visibility is focused on the immediate vicinity, but this is balanced by occasional views towards the surrounding uplands and Usk Valley landscape. For the primary school and those residential properties facing the site, a visual buffer is established by intervening vegetation and the overgrown pond, so that the interrelationship with the site is reduced. Access to the two PROW’s which cross the site is poor at present. As a result, it is considered that the site exerts a modest or low influence on the landscape character of the wider LLCA, with the exception of the newly built residential nursing home which overlooks the site creating a strong interrelationship.

It is therefore considered that Llanfoist Urban Area LLCA has a LOW sensitivity to the type of change proposed, but that this is locally raised to MEDIUM for the nursing home, where residents enjoy open views to the east over the site.

Local Landscape Character Area 7: Abergavenny Urban Fringe



The urban fringe of Abergavenny follows the River Usk floodplain as it arcs around from the west to run due south. Along the northern edge of the river, much of the built form comprises stone and brick built Victorian terraces which face the river. However, a mature belt of intervening trees limits the visual interrelationship between the houses and the river. Only a small group of cottages to the west have views of the floodplain, so that the influence exerted by the river floodplain on the urban edge is limited to one of setting. The only built form which encroaches towards the floodplain is Byefield Lane car park, Abergavenny Castle and Museum and the Mill Street Industrial Estate with its low industrial-unit buildings. Only the castle has a direct interrelationship with the river meadows as all other elements are set within generously landscaped plots.

As the urban form of the town extends south to meet the A40/A465 junction, an established residential area flanks both sides of the Monmouth Road as it approaches the town centre. Attractive render and stone Victorian villas, often set amongst mature trees and frontage hedges, line the road close to the town centre and for much of the approach to the town, a continuous local stone boundary wall strengthens the sense of cohesion and creates a strong sense of place. Over time, mixed pre and post-war housing has grown up amongst the villas and has extended the urban form to meet the A465 junction on the western side of the road.

This LLCA is a well lit, urban area of 'high brightness' with outer residential edges which have lower levels of lighting and medium brightness,

The site itself is separated from this LLCA by both the River Usk and the A465 so that there is a very weak visual interrelationship between the two, even from Abergavenny Castle where the site, set against the backdrop of the recycling centre, exerts a relatively small influence on the setting. There is also limited opportunity to travel between the LLCA and the site other than along the road network. As a result it is considered that this varied and urban character area has a VERY LOW sensitivity to the type of change proposed on the development site.





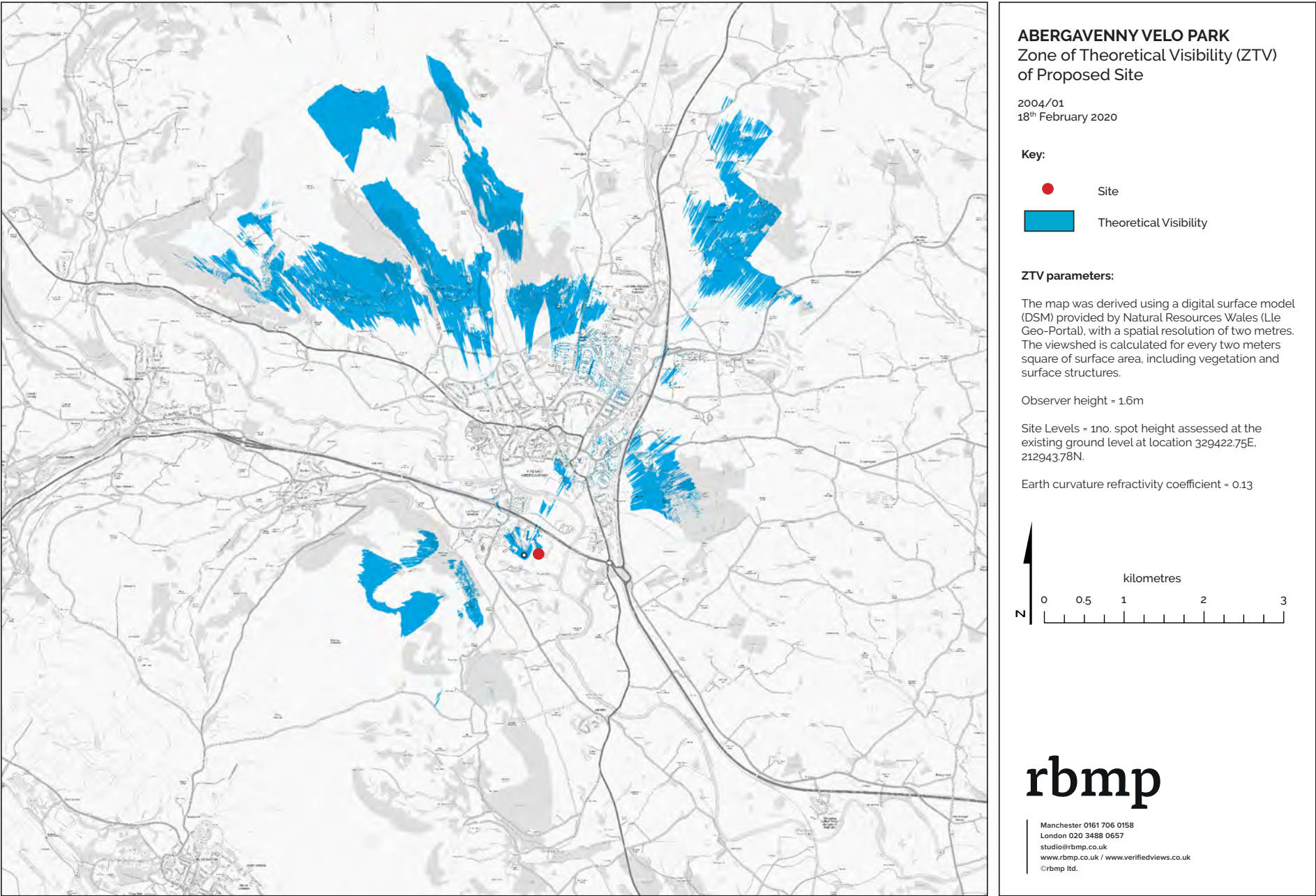
# 6.0 Baseline: Visual Context & Viewpoints

The photographs contained in this report were taken in February and early March 2020 to present the optimum visibility of the site, i.e. before leafing out. Weather conditions were varied, but representative shots were taken initially in order to agree viewpoints with the Local Authority. Due to the Covid 19 ‘Stay at Home’ policy, it was not possible to re-take photographs taken on poor visibility days before leaf out. Similarly, any additional viewpoints agreed at the meeting with Monmouthshire County Council were also delayed until after leaf out.

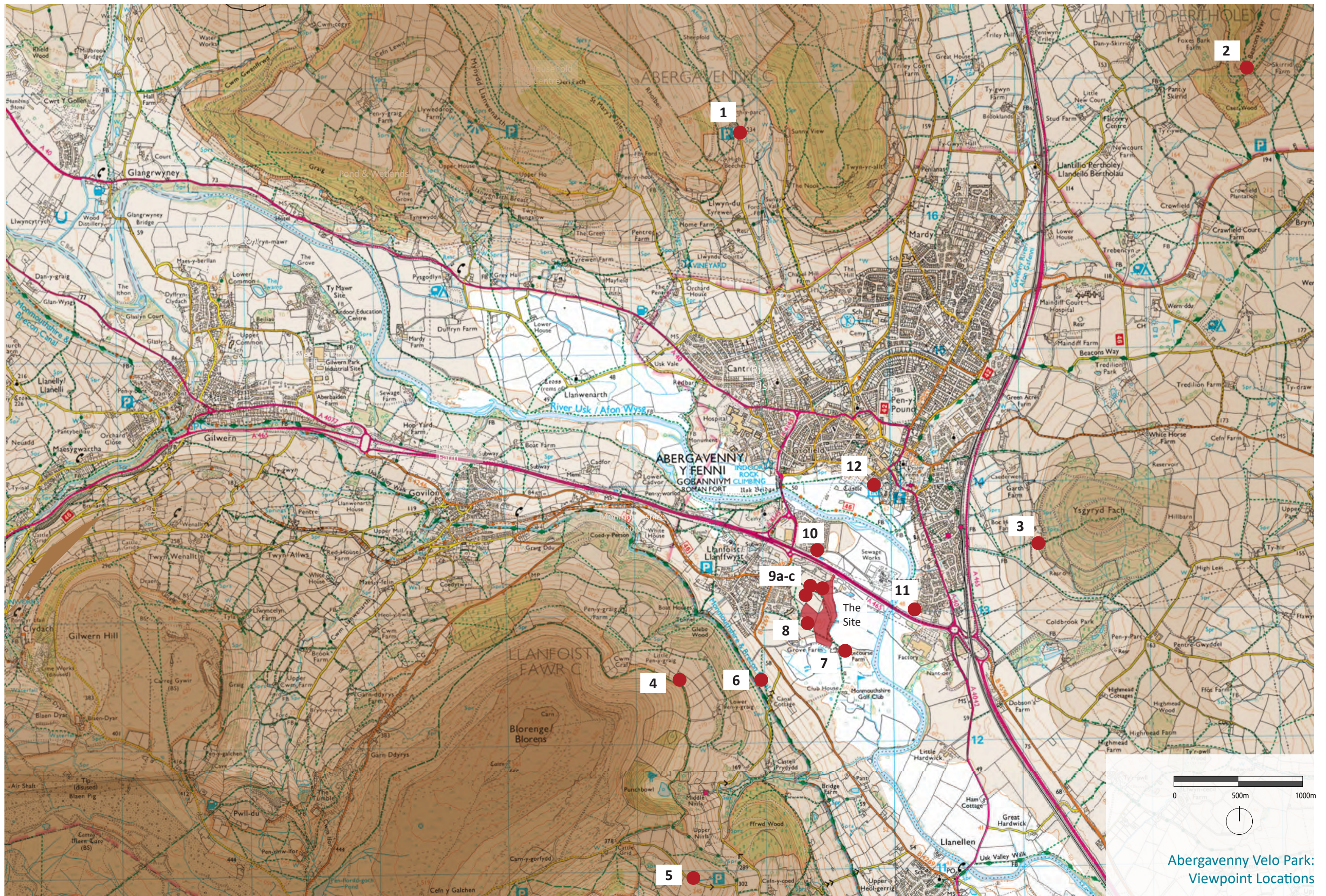
The photographs were taken with a Nikon D750, full sized sensor, 50mm fixed focal length as recommended in GLVIA in order to produce an undistorted representation.

A ‘Zone of Theoretical Visibility’ was generated in line with guidelines set out by the Landscape Institute. The following computer generated model indicates the areas where the site is theoretically visible. However, this modelling is based on a ‘bare earth’ scenario and does not take into account intervening vegetation or built form. The model was useful however in allowing us to confirm/add/omit the viewpoint locations that were initially identified through the process of site survey and desktop study.

The following pages contain those viewpoints which were approved to go forward for assessment.











Viewpoint 1 : The Sugar Loaf Car Park & Viewing Point (Specific Viewpoint)

This Viewpoint has been chosen to reflect views experienced by the general public receptors using the elevated public car park to begin the walk to the summit of Sugar Loaf or to experience the views over Abergavenny and beyond. From this point there are elevated and panoramic views to the south over Abergavenny and Llanfoist and stretching out over the Usk Valley and the Bloreng. Within this panorama, the site is clearly discernible, although it forms a narrow strip and a small part of the view.

The green industrial recycling centre buildings and adjacent pylons are visible immediately in front of the man-made landfill embankment. Also discernible are the three storey Premier Inn, the fast food outlet and the care home. Beyond the site to the south, the two farmsteads, Racecourse Farm and Grove Farm, are just perceptible.

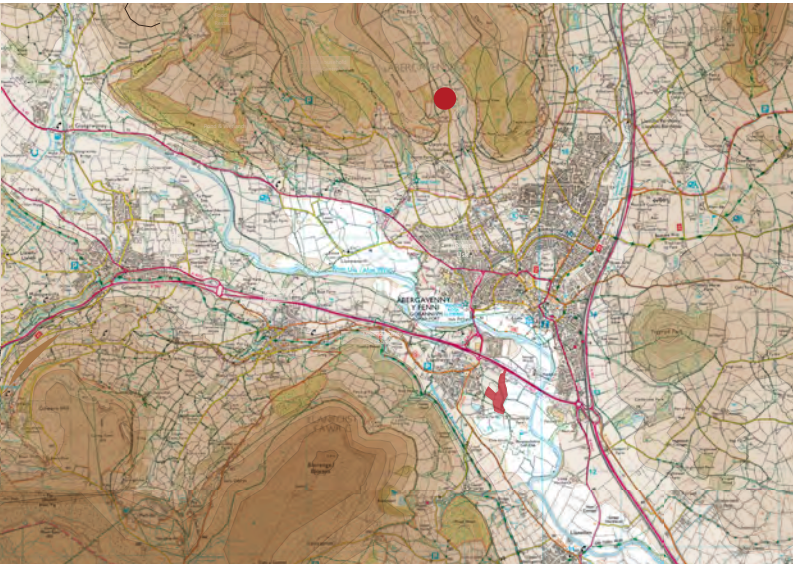
Within this view, the grazed fields of the site are seen as part of the Llanfoist lowlands area and merge into the wider agricultural landscape. The capped landfill site, by contrast, is incongruous in the view, both in form and the colour tone of the vegetation.

Although the site merges with the Llanfoist lowlands, it is notable within this view that the built form of the hotel, care home and recycling centre extends in front of the site so that the site is seen in an urban fringe context.

Given that the viewpoint is within the Brecon Beacons National Park with potential for higher visitor numbers and that the receptors in this location are likely to be highly focused on the view itself (but also noting that the views of the site from this location are distant, form a very small part of the view and with built form immediately in front) it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is HIGH.

Lighting

Within this view, the site is seen at a distance, does not form the skyline and forms a small parcel of land which sits directly alongside a mixed use area which is well lit with high and medium level of brightness. The adjacent Recycling Centre has floodlights, the fast food outlets have elevated and lit advertising panels and the residential area of Llanfoist has medium brightness levels associated suburban areas. The urban area of Abergavenny sits in the foreground to the site and has the high brightness levels associated with an urban centre.







### Viewpoint 2 : The Ysgyryd Ridge (Representative Viewpoint)

Viewpoint 2 has been selected as the closest point to the site from the Ysgyryd Ridge. From here, the site is visible as part of an elevated and panoramic view containing Abergavenny, Llanfoist, the Bloreng and Sugar Loaf, and stretching out over the Usk Valley to the east and the Brecon Beacons National Park to the west.

From this vantage point, the site is seen as part of the undulating fields of the Llanfoist lowlands which sit slightly above the river floodplain and wrap around the eastern edge of Llanfoist. Visually, the grazed fields of the site link into the lower slopes of the Bloreng and with the River Usk Meadows to the north of the A465.

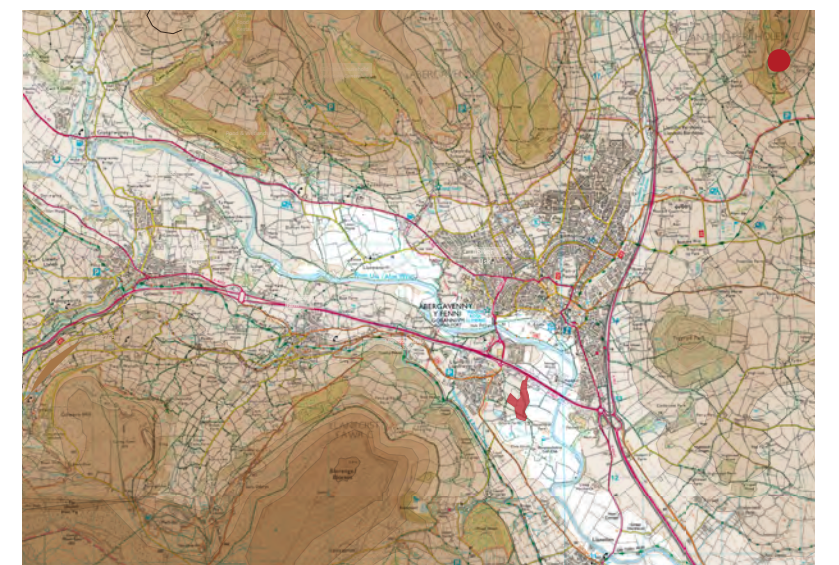
The green industrial sheds of the recycling centre can be picked out in the view along with the man-made embankment of the landfill site, which from this viewpoint is seen as a long, rounded mound, distinguishable from the adjacent fields by its regular shape and lighter colour vegetation. The overgrown vegetation of the pond is clearly visible and partially screens the higher western field behind.

The lower elevations of the site are largely obscured by intervening landform, buildings and vegetation and the potential vehicular entrance point is hidden from view by the A465.

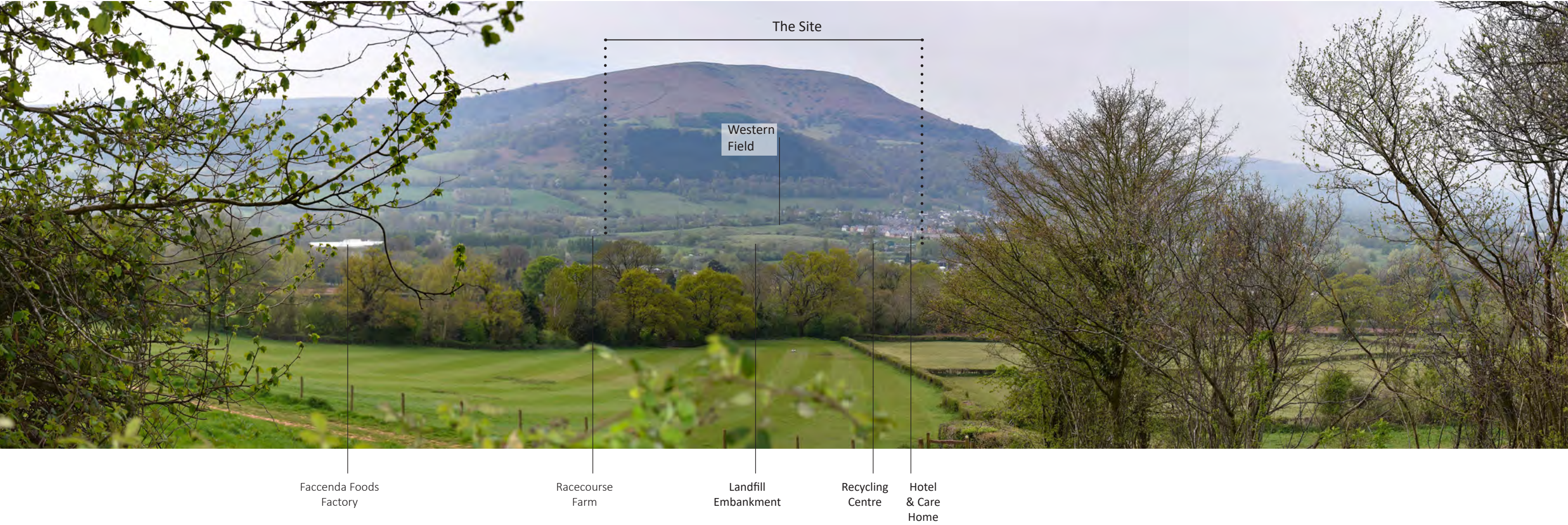
Given that the views of site from this location form a small part of the view and are seen in the context of built form, but noting that the viewpoint is within the National Park with potential for higher receptor numbers who are likely to be highly focused on the view, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is HIGH.

### Lighting

Within this view, the site is seen at a distance, does not form the skyline but forms a linear strip of land which extends out from the urban fringe across an unlit network of small fields, albeit an area which is influenced by the high brightness levels associated with the recycling centre in front of the site. The adjacent Recycling Centre has floodlights, the fast food outlets have elevated and lit advertising panels and the residential area of Llanfoist has medium brightness levels associated suburban areas. The urban area of Abergavenny sits in the foreground to the site and has the high brightness levels associated with an urban centre.







Viewpoint 3 : Ysgyryd Fach (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint is selected as representative of views from the public right of way which rises across the open fields of the Ysgyryd Fach slopes towards the wooded summit. From the higher areas of the lower slopes (from above the 100m contour approximately) there are open views in the direction of the site.

From here, the site can be clearly seen beyond the landfill embankment with the green recycling centre buildings and the residential area of Llanfoist to the west. Most other built form, including the A465 and associated infrastructure and servicing, apart from the Faccenda Foods factory, is either screened or heavily filtered through intervening vegetation so that the site appears as part of an open lowland landscape merging into the wider countryside.

From this vantage point, the higher ground at the southern tip of the site, the western field and the embankment below the care home are all seen sloping towards the view so that they are highly visible. The gappy and over mature hedgerow which runs along the boundary of the western field can be clearly identified, with glimpses of the grazed field beyond the site seen through the hedge line. The eastern part of the site can also be seen falling towards the floodplain.

From this direction, the site appears as a long narrow field with no dividing hedge lines and the lower elevations of the site to the north and south are hidden behind the landfill embankment and green recycling centre sheds.

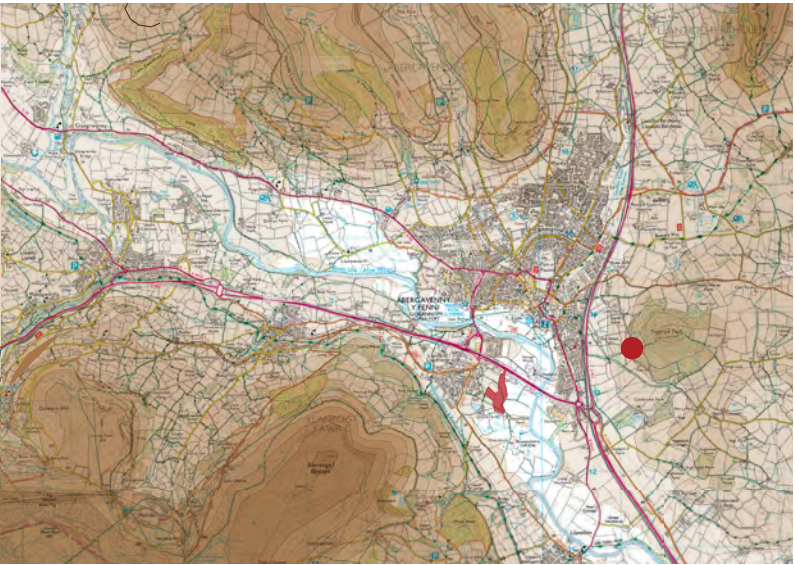
It is noted that within the viewpoint (at the location of the higher style) the site is centred in the view and framed by vegetation either side of the style. However, from within the open fields below, the site forms a much smaller part of a wider view which includes Sugar Loaf to the west and the wider Usk Valley to the east.

From higher elevations along the forestry tracks there are occasional views of site where timber has been cleared, but replanting has occurred so that generally the upper slopes of the Ysgyryd Fach are considered to be dense woodland with limited views outwards.

Given that the views of the site from this location are only a small part of the view and that the location is outside of the National Park, but also noting that the site is directly ‘facing’ the view and that receptors in this location are on a public right of way and likely to be focused on both the walk and the impressive views, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is MEDIUM.

Lighting

Within this view, the site is seen on the opposite side of the valley and extends significantly from the urban edge of Llanfoist across a surrounding unlit network of fields to meet the River Usk floodplain. Although the site does not form the skyline it extends significantly from the medium level of brightness associated with Llanfoist and merges with the dark sparsely populated rural areas. In addition, intervening vegetation screens the views of Abergavenny between the site and the viewpoint.







Viewpoint 4 : The Blorenge Ridge (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint has been chosen to reflect the experience gained by the general public receptors who walk the public right of way which follows the lower perimeter of the Blorenge Summit and is within the Brecon Beacons National.

From this elevated viewpoint, the site can be seen in its entirety with the recycling centre and landfill embankment as a backdrop. The pond and the school playing field act as a buffer between the site and Llanfoist and this can be appreciated from this vantage point.

The site’s western field and central ridge can be seen wrapping around the pond and dropping away to the floodplain. These fields link visually with the wider agricultural fields. The hedgerow vegetation is an important part of this visual link and additional hedgerow planting to further subdivide the fields could be in keeping with the surrounding lowlands landscape.

From this direction, whilst there is a clear break between the built form and open ground, the yellow/brown tone of the landfill site, which sits directly behind the site, serves to extend the urban influence beyond the site and further towards the River Usk, so that in this view the site is seen against the backdrop of a man-made landform and closely related to the urban fringe of Llanfoist as opposed to truly open landscape.

Given that the views of the site from this location are a small part of a panoramic view, but also noting that the view is elevated and from within the National Park where higher visitor numbers are possible and that receptors are likely to be highly focused on the view, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is HIGH.

Lighting

Within this elevated view, the entire site is seen alongside the well lit residential area of Llanfoist. The adjacent Recycling Centre is floodlit and the fast food outlets have elevated and lit advertising panels. Beyond the River Usk, Abergavenny sits as a backdrop with high brightness levels associated with an urban centre.

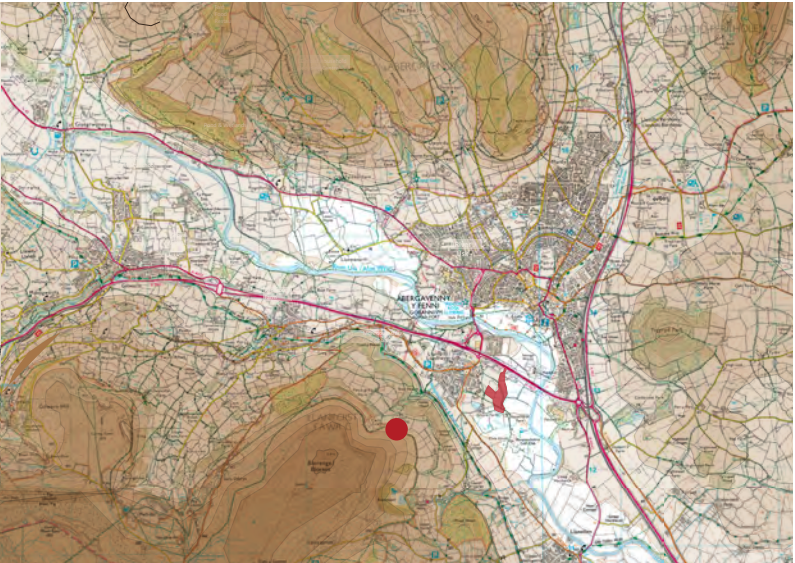


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Viewpoint 5 : The Blorengel Car Park and Look Out Point (Specific Viewpoint)

This viewpoint has been chosen to reflect views experienced by the general public receptors within the Brecon Beacons National Park using the elevated public car park to begin the walk to the summit of the Blorengel or to experience the panoramic views over Abergavenny and beyond.

From the Blorengel car park and viewing point there is a narrow view opportunity from where the site is clearly visible. From here, the view is elevated and the site is framed by topography so that it becomes the focus of the middle distance.

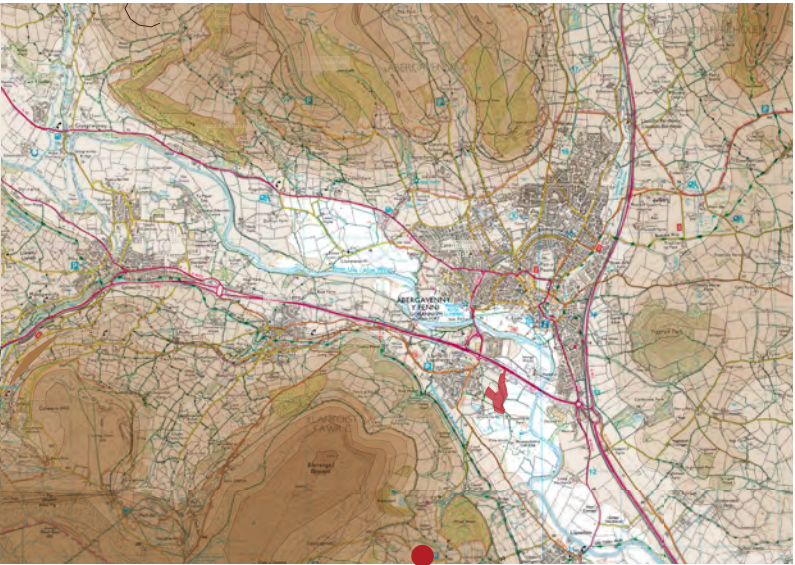
As in all views from this direction, the main focus of the view is the built form of Abergavenny and the wider landform of the Ysgyrd and Sugar Loaf stretching away to the north. The site itself is seen against the urbanising backdrop of the recycling centre and the landfill embankment, but it's grazed fields visually merge with the river meadows on the northern side of the A465 and the wider open countryside. It is considered that this green/pasture wedge which includes the southern part of the site is important as an open foreground to this view.

Looking across the site it is possible to discern the change in landscape character from south to north, with the grazed fields in the south merging into the more unkempt scrubland in the north of the site adjacent to One Planet Centre and the recycling centre.

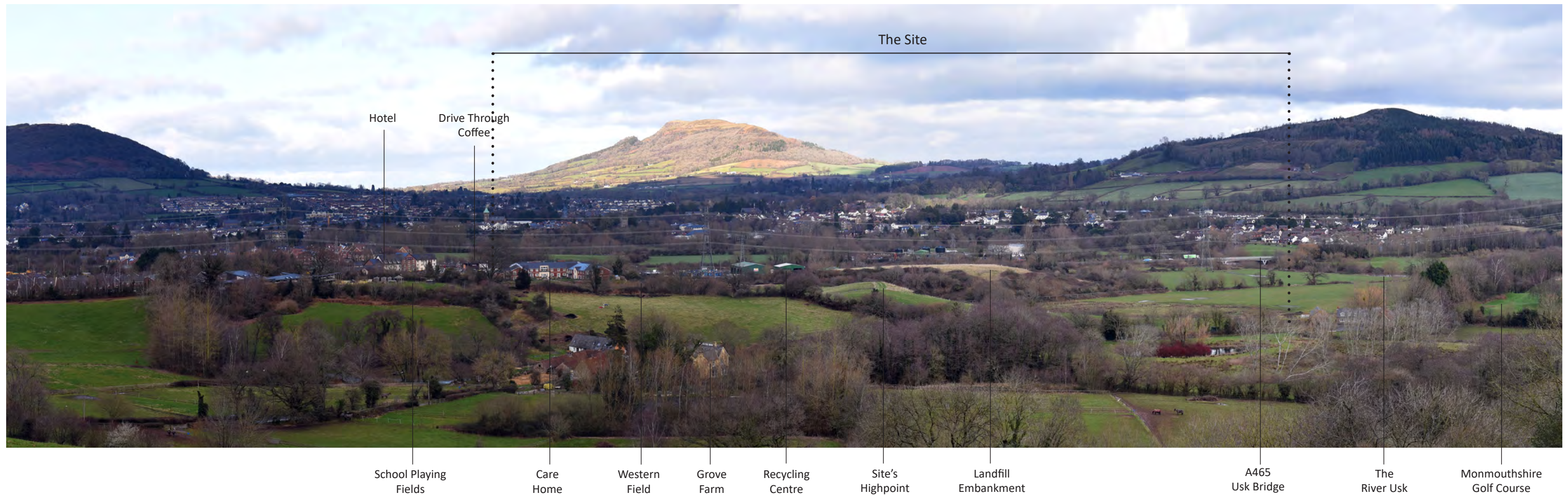
Given that the receptors in this location within the National Park are likely to be potentially higher in number and highly focused on the view itself, but also noting that the views of the site from this location, although in the middle distance, make up a small part of a panoramic view, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is HIGH

Lighting Effects

Within this view, the site does not form the skyline and forms a small parcel of land within the view, sitting directly alongside a well lit mixed use area with high and medium level of brightness including the adjacent floodlit recycling centre, the fast food outlets with elevated and lit advertising panels and the residential area of Llanfoist. The urban area of Abergavenny sits beyond the River Usk meadows with the high brightness levels associated with an urban centre. Although the site forms an open foreground to the site in the day, this would be less apparent during the hours when lighting would be in operation.







### Viewpoint 6 : Lower Blorenges Slopes Public Footpath (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint was selected as a representative of the views attainable by the general public receptors using the PROW which crosses the lower Blorenges slopes, closest to the site and just outside of the National Park. From here, the site is seen from an elevated position and at close range.

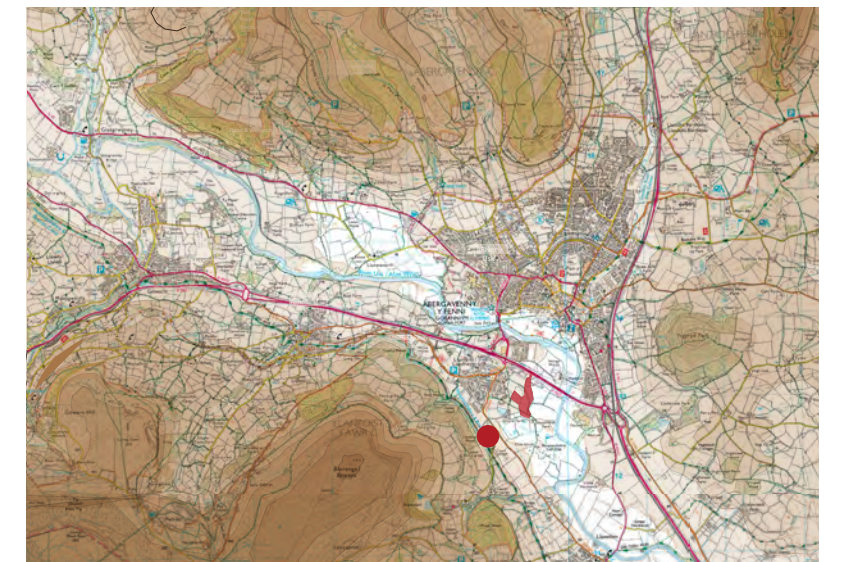
The site is viewed against the backdrop of the care home, recycling centre, landfill embankment and the moving traffic along the A465, so that although the pasture of the site, where visible, links in with the adjacent Llanfoist Lowlands and the school playing fields, it is viewed within the context of the urban form of Llanfoist, particularly the northern part of the site.

The most visible part of the site is the central ridge-line which is seen clearly against the backdrop of the scrub covered landfill embankment. The western side of the central ridge-line is notable in that it drops sharply down towards the floodplain clearly defining its extent. Intervening hedgerow vegetation screens the ground level of most of the remaining parts of the site from view, including the western field which runs across the view, but falls away from the viewpoint.

Given that the views of the site from this location are a small part of the view and that smaller numbers of walkers may be present on this local PROW, but also noting that receptors in this location are likely to be highly focused on both the view and the walk, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is MEDIUM.

### Lighting Effects

Within this elevated view, the site does not form the skyline and forms a small part of a panorama. It sits within the open landscape which lies between the view and the urban edge. The visible parts of the site are seen as part of an unlit sparsely populated, field pattern and separated from built form. The floodlit Recycling Centre sits closer towards Llanfoist and the high brightness environment of Abergavenny sits behind the site.







Viewpoint 7 : Monmouthshire Golf Course (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint was selected as this first available view of site on approach along the local PROW which crosses the golf course and is chosen to represent the general public receptors who walk this route. Within the golf course itself, a mature vegetation structure screens the site from view and it is also considered that those receptors who are playing golf would not actively engage with their surroundings in the same way as walkers.

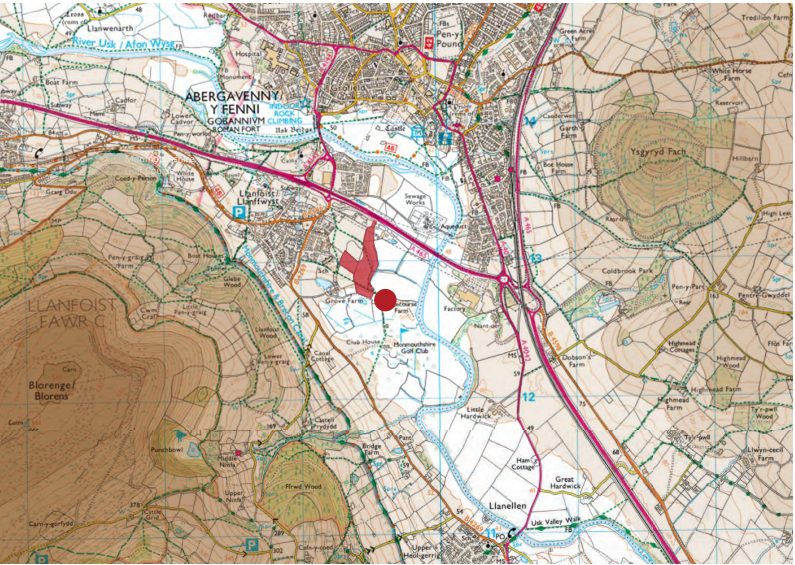
From this location, immediately after crossing a stile and emerging from hedgerow trees, there are open views across the southern tip of the site and of the landform as it falls away to the floodplain and the River Usk corridor. The remainder of the site and adjacent industrial sheds, care home and housing, are screened from view by the near landform. The electricity pylons which cross the northern tip of site are visible and although a detractor are not entirely dominant in the view owing to the elevated landscapes beyond.

The grazed slopes of the site form the near skyline in this view, with Sugar Loaf in the distance. The steep incline and grazed pasture within the site contrasts with the character of the floodplain levels and vegetation marking a clear change in landscape character and is an attractive part of the view. Additionally, the overgrown hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the site also forms the skyline and contributes to the agricultural character of the site.

Given that the views of the site from this location are close range, and also noting that receptors in this location are likely to be highly focused on both the attractive view and the walk, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is HIGH, despite the potential for fewer people to experience the view.

Lighting Effects

Within this close range view, the visible part of site forms the near skyline. No existing sources of lighting are present, other than the headlamps that would be glimpsed on the elevated section of the A465, so that the great majority of view is of an unlit, semi natural landscape. The view is one of open green fields, scrub covered embankments and floodplain. Lighting from isolated dwellings would be visible on the distant uplands.







**Viewpoint 8 : Public Footpath running alongside School (Representative Viewpoint)**

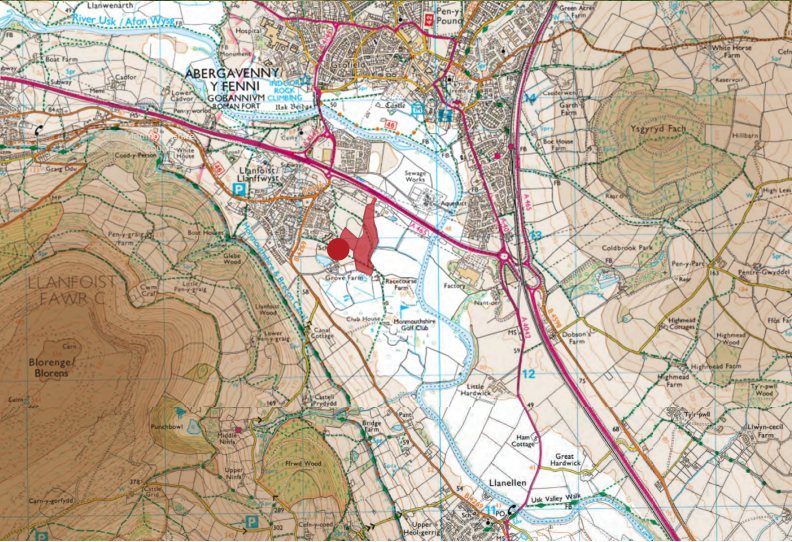
This viewpoint was selected as the first available viewpoint of the site on approach from the local PROW alongside the school and represents those general public receptors walking this route. From this location, the upper part of the site's western field is just visible through the gappy boundary hedgerow, but only as a narrow strip within the view and the Ysgyryd Fach and Ysgyryd rise above the site to form the focus of the view.

The majority of the site is not visible from this viewpoint and does not become fully visible until reaching the next field where the PROW emerges to the southern end of the site where there are open views over the south of the site, the landfill embankment, floodplain and River Usk corridor. As for viewpoint 7 from the golf course stile, the landform of the site's highpoint screens the remainder of the site from view.

Given that the views towards site from this location are close range and that receptors are likely to be highly focused on the attractive view and walk, but also noting that a hedgerow heavily filters views of the site, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is MEDIUM.

**Lighting**

From this close range location, the majority of site is screened from view. The ground-level areas which are glimpsed do not form the skyline and are filtered through boundary vegetation. No existing forms of lighting are present in this open, green field view, other than the lighting from isolated dwellings on the distant uplands.







Viewpoint 9a : Public Right of Way, North end of Ffyordd Sain Ffwyst (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint was selected as representative of the publicly accessible views from the edge of the recent housing development, adjacent to the nursing home. It is also located on the existing public right of way which enters site below the nursing home retaining wall. The receptors considered include the walkers of the PROW, and residents of the housing and care home.

From this location approximately 60m west of site, there are filtered views to the central part of the site, to the site's highpoint and towards the western field which slopes towards the receptor. Within this close range view, the lower elevations of site are screened by the intervening vegetation within the overgrown pond. The eastern border of the site, which slopes away from view beyond the central ridge is also not visible in this view.

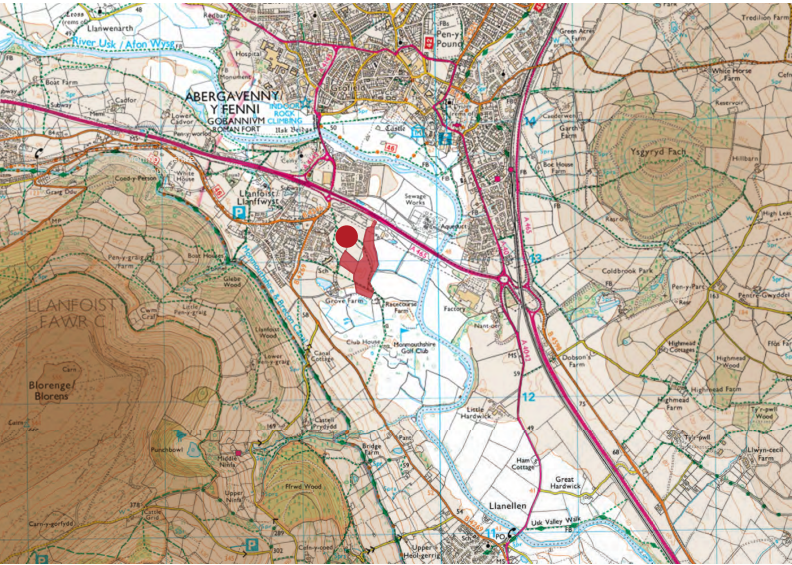
The extents of the western field which are visible are seen against the backdrop of the Bloreng and adjacent escarpment. The central part of the site which is visible, is seen beneath the rising embankment of the landfill site. Only the southern high-point of the site forms the skyline.

The northern part of the site, the recycling centre and the A465 are screened from view by the nursing home building, so that the view over site is generally free of built form and open to the wider landscape, with a portion of the site forming the skyline as noted. From this direction and elevation, the landfill site appears as a vegetated slope as opposed to a man-made embankment.

Given that the views of the site from this location are close range, albeit filtered by intervening vegetation, and also noting that receptors in this location are likely to be either highly focused on both the attractive open view either as walkers or residents, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is HIGH.

Lighting Effects

Within this close range view which is representative of the PROW and northern end of Residential Ffyordd Sain Ffwyst, the site is part of an unlit, natural, rolling landscape and the adjacent housing face onto this dark landscape. Existing lighting within the view comes from the residential access roads and housing, nursing home and glimpsed lights from isolated dwellings on the lower Bloreng slopes.





The Site



Viewpoint 9b : Nursing Home (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint was selected as representative of the publicly accessible views from the public right of way which enters site below Foxhunters Nursing Home (retaining wall seen left of view) and from the nursing home itself. The receptors considered include the walkers on the PROW, and residents of the nursing home.

From this location, there are filtered views to the central part of the site and of the western field which slopes towards the receptor. The site's high-point is just visible through dense intervening vegetation although during leaf out, there would be no view. The low-lying zone around the pond is entirely screened from view by vegetation and the eastern edge of site is not visible, sloping away from view beyond the central ridge.

The northern part of the site, the recycling centre and the A465 are all screened from view by Foxhunters, so that the view across site is free of built form and open to the wider landscape. From this point, even the landfill site appears as a vegetated slope as opposed to a man-made embankment.

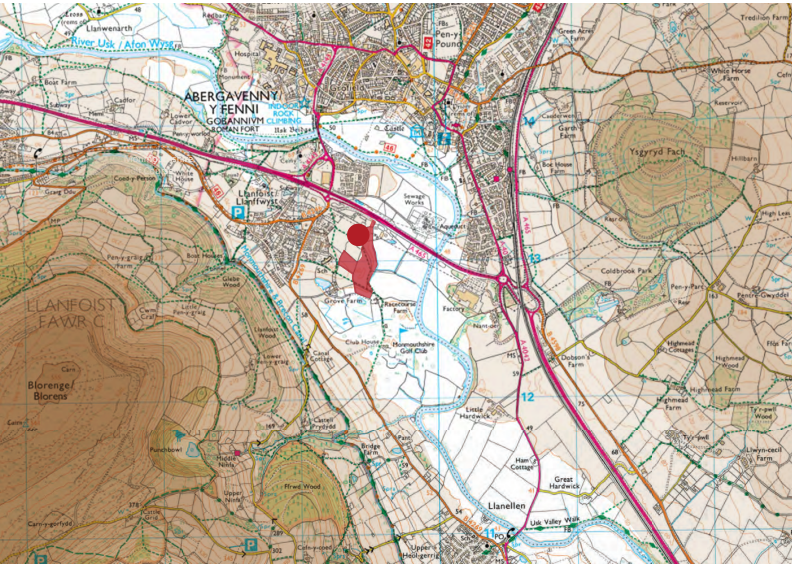
The visible extent of the western field is seen against the backdrop of the Bloreng and adjacent escarpment and the central part of the site is seen beneath the rising landfill embankment. From this viewpoint, the site does not form the skyline.

It is noted that those residents of Foxhunters occupying east facing rooms would have open views over the majority of site with only the southern and eastern edge of site out of view as it falls away in elevation. These open views also include the recycling centre, landfill site and A465 corridor.

Given that the views of the site from this location are close range, albeit filtered by intervening vegetation, and also noting that receptors in this location are likely to be walkers highly focused on the attractive views or residents who are highly attuned to views which part of the amenity of the dwelling, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is HIGH.

Lighting Effects

From this close range view, which is representative of the PROW and nursing home, the site is part of an unlit, natural, rolling landscape which extends from the urban edge. The only existing lighting within the view comes from the residential access roads and housing on Ffyordd Sain Ffwyst and glimpsed lights from isolated dwellings on the lower Bloreng slopes.







Viewpoint 9C : Ffordd Sain Ffwyst Looking South East (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint was selected as representative of the publicly accessible views from the road access and houses situated on Ffordd Sain Ffwyst. The receptors considered include the residents along Ffordd Sain Ffwyst.

From this viewpoint, the majority of the ground level of site is not visible and is screened by dense intervening vegetation associated with the existing pond and the nursing home. For most of the road there are glimpses of the land rising to the site’s high-point, but these are heavily filtered through vegetation and in the summer months there would be no available views. However, open views of the site’s highpoint are possible for those residents at living at the very southern end of the road. There are clear and close range views of the majority of the site’s western field from the entire length of the road.

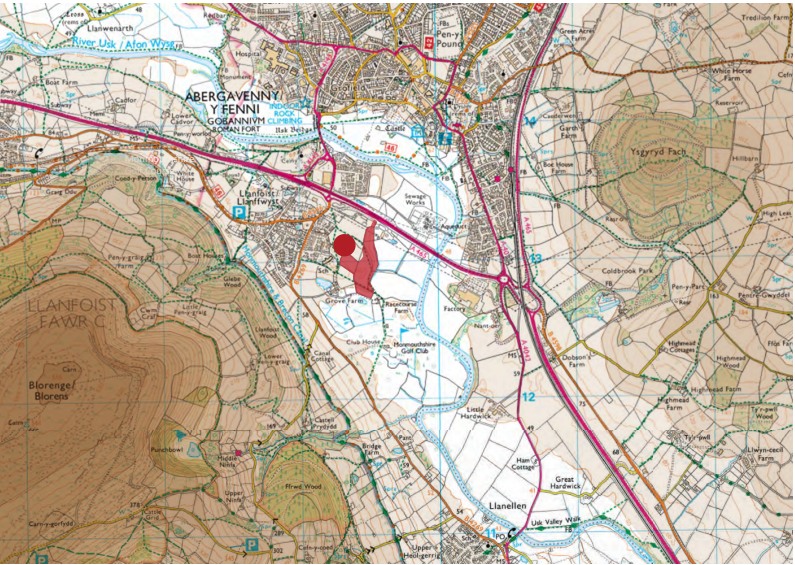
The site’s high-point forms the skyline where it is visible from the southern end of the road. For the remainder of the road, the site does not break the skyline and is seen against the backdrop of the Bloreng, adjacent escarpment, landfill embankment and the rising ground of Skirrid Fach.

Although there are only limited views of the ground level of the site, the views across site contribute to the visual unity of the wider natural landscape and a view which, with the exception of pylons, is free of built form.

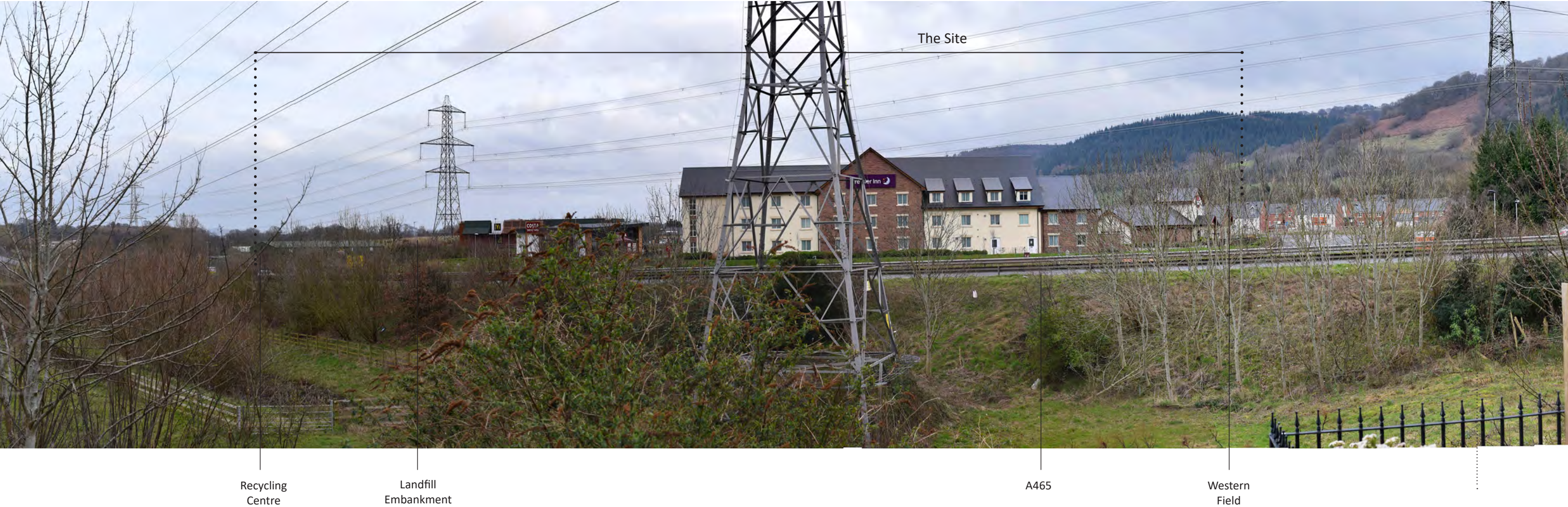
Given that the views towards site from this location are close range, albeit filtered by intervening vegetation, and also noting that the site contributes to the wider open view with no detractor,s and that receptors in this location are likely to be either highly attuned to a view which is a part of the amenity of the dwelling and part of their daily lives (residents facing onto view), it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is VERY HIGH.

Lighting Effects

Within this close range view, which is representative of the residential area at the southern end of Ffordd Sain Ffwyst, the site is part of an unlit, natural, rolling landscape which extends from the urban edge. The only existing lighting within the view comes from the residential access roads and housing on Ffyordd Sain Ffwyst, the nursing home and glimpsed lights from Isolated dwellings on the surrounding distant uplands.







**Viewpoint 10 : Residential View from Langpen Drive. (Representative Viewpoint)**

This viewpoint was selected as representative of the view experienced by the receptors who live within the housing area to the north of the site on the opposite side the A465. The view is dominated by the road and moving traffic and by overhead pylons, a 3 story hotel and drive through restaurant. It is an urbanized view albeit influenced by the wider setting which includes the Blorengé and adjacent escarpment.

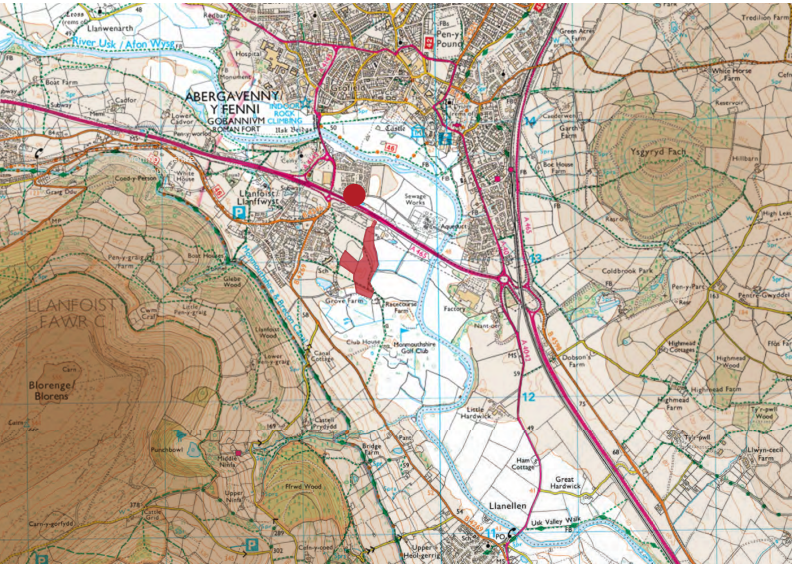
From this location, the ground level of the site is largely screened from view by the intervening dual carriageway, embankments and built form. The green sheds of the recycling centre help to locate the location of the site’s northern tip and entrance point but the ground level is again hidden from view.

To the west of the hotel, the site’s western field is visible falling towards the receptor, though filtered through intervening trees. However, in summer months this view would be entirely screened by foliage as would a large part of the remaining view. The site does not form the skyline at any point.

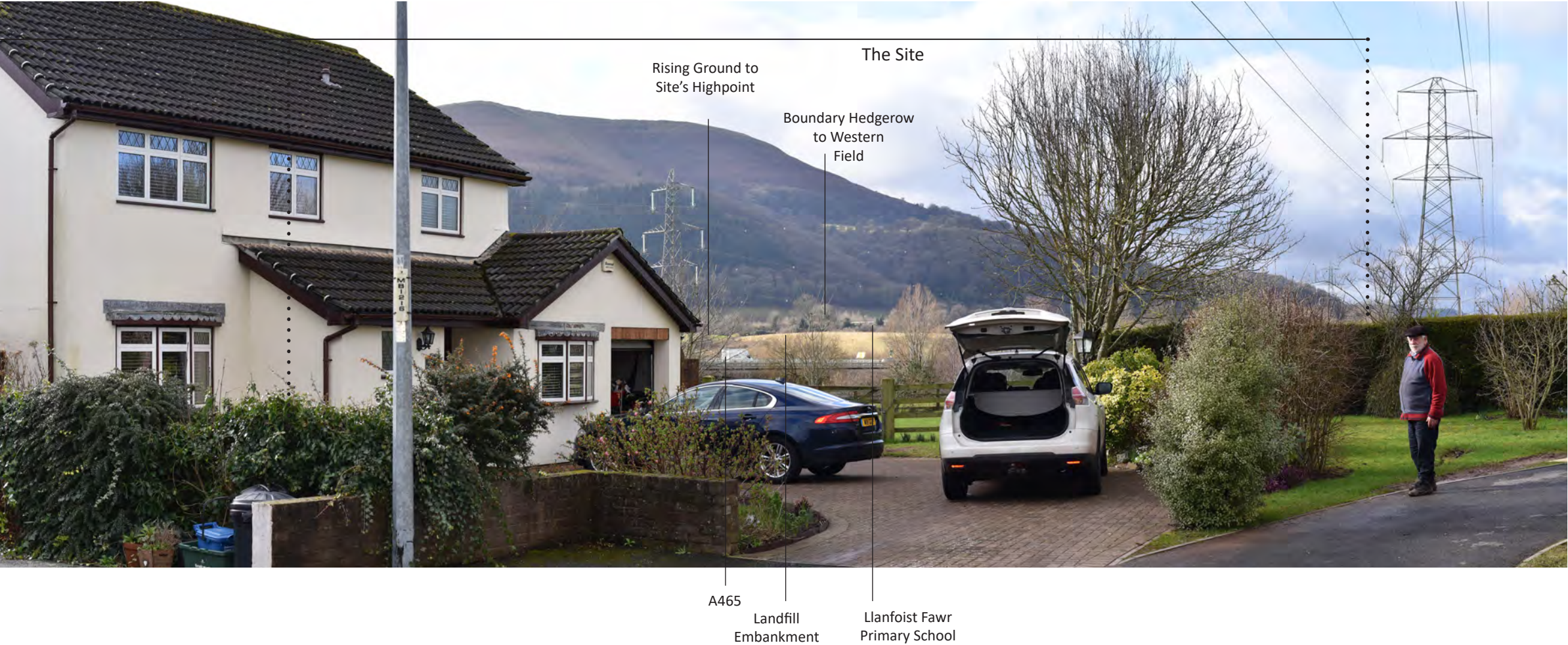
Although the receptors in this location are residents and therefore attuned to the view, it is balanced with the fact that available views of site are heavily filtered through screen planting for the A465, and within the context of built form and many visual detractors. In addition, the houses are not orientated towards the site and the focus of views in the general direction of the site is likely to be the Blorengé. It is therefore considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is LOW.

**Lighting Effects**

Within this view, which is representative of the residential area on the northern side of the A465, the majority of the site is hidden from view by intervening built form and infrastructure. The only part of the site which is seen in heavily filtered views through vegetation is the rising ground of the western field which is part of the unlit, natural, rolling landscape which extends from the urban edge. Although the dual carriageway itself is not lit, the view is dominated by Pylons and the 'high brightness' areas of the fast food outlets with its elevated signage and the three story hotel. The floodlights of the recycling centre would generate light spillage and the residential edge of Llanfoist consists of the medium brightness environment associated with suburban areas.







Viewpoint 11 : Residential View from Gobannian Way (Representative Viewpoint)

This viewpoint has been selected as representative of the view towards site experienced by the receptors who live within the closer points of the Ysbytty Fields residential area, east of the site on the opposite site of the River Usk and A465.

From this location, the A465 is in close proximity and moving vehicles crossing over the elevated Usk Bridge are clearly visible. Despite this, the view is however, dominated by the steeply rising landform of the Bloreng and there is little built form within the view other than the electricity pylons and the roof of Llanfoist Primary School, which is just discernible .

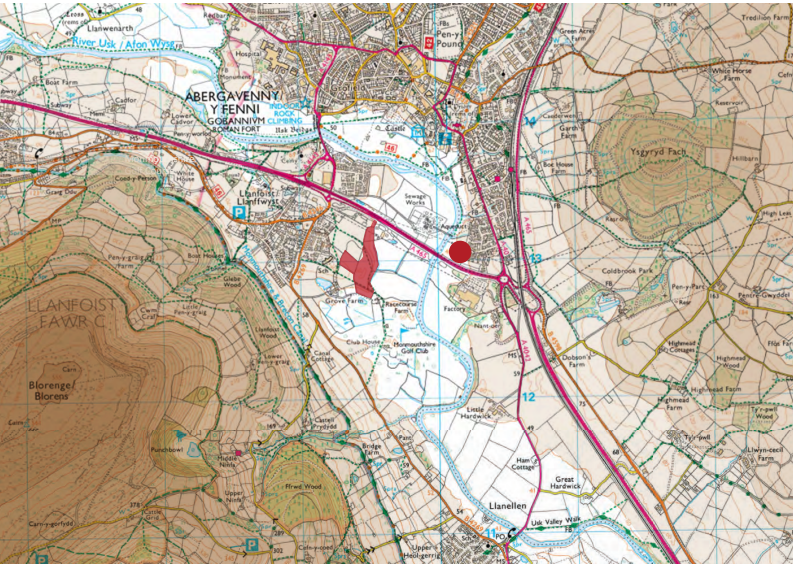
The majority of the site is hidden from view behind the landfill embankment and from those upper floor windows where there may be an oblique view along the A465, the road embankment and the recycling centre buildings would heavily filter any available views of the northern tip of site.

A glimpse of the site's high-point in the south is discernible, along with the western field hedgerow, which marks a part of the site's southern boundary. In the summer months these views would be heavily filtered by intervening foliage. As such, it is considered that the site has limited influence on this view.

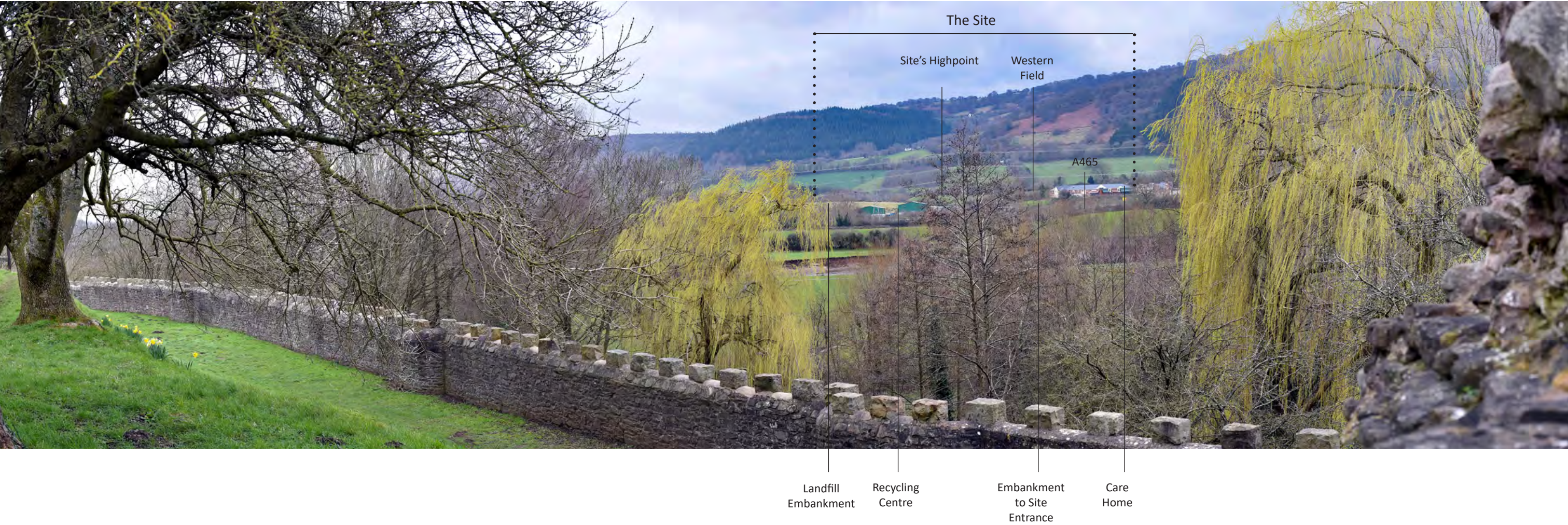
Although the receptors in this location are residents and therefore potentially attuned to the view, it is balanced against limited available views of the site, intervening vegetation and major roads, and the fact that the focus of any long distance views in the direction of the site is likely to be the Bloreng. It is therefore considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is LOW.

Lighting Effects

Within this view, which is representative of the residential area on the edge of Ysbytty Fields, the majority of the site is hidden from view by intervening built form and landform. Where visible at the site's highpoint and the upper edge of the western, the site is part of an unlit, semi-natural, rolling landscape which extends to meet the lower slopes of the Bloreng. The dual carriageway itself is not lit in this section and this view, although containing major infrastructure and moving traffic, has no lighting other than traffic headlights. The west facing windows of the house would have oblique views of the recycling centre floodlights and the fast food restaurant signage.







Viewpoint 12 : Abergavenny Castle Grounds (Specific Viewpoint)

This location was selected to reflect views experienced by general public receptors visiting the key attraction of Abergavenny Castle, where visitors would be keenly attuned to their surroundings.

From the rampart ruins overlooking the River Usk Meadows there are open views in the direction of the site. It is noted that in the summer months this view would be heavily filtered through intervening foliage, however in the winter months, the A465 corridor, associated moving traffic and overhead electricity pylons are all visible. The green sheds of the Recycling Centre are also clearly discernible with the landfill embankment rising up behind. The residential care home which adjoins the site is visible with a slightly elevated appearance and abrupt interface with the site.

The west facing embankment along the eastern boundary of the care home, can be picked out along with the high-point in the southern part of the site and the upper elevations of the western field and its boundary hedgerow are just evident. However, it is notable that there is no available view of the majority of the lower elevations within site as they are screened behind landform, built form and intervening vegetation.

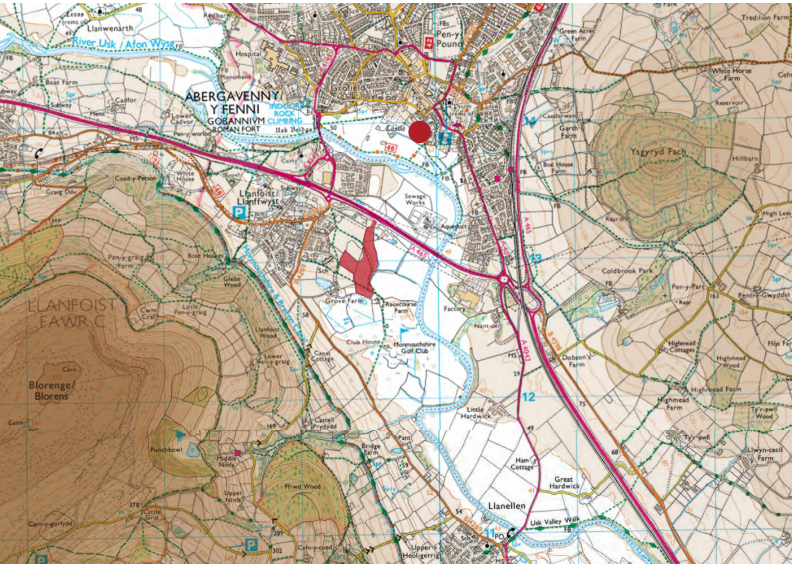
From this vantage point the site is seen as a narrow strip between the recycling centre and the care home, but as noted earlier, in the summer months, these available views would be heavily filtered through the intervening vegetation, particular the trees directly below the ramparts.

Given that the receptors in this location, who have walked from the castle to the ramparts, are likely to be highly focused on the attractive wider view and noting that the views of the site from this location are at a similar elevation, but balancing this with the fact that the view of the site itself is heavily filtered by intervening vegetation and forms a small part of the wider view, it is considered that the sensitivity of the visual receptors in this location is MEDIUM.

From the more elevated upper floors of the tower, a larger part of the site's ground level would be visible. Where the site is visible either side of the nursing home, it would be seen with the nursing home and recycling centre in the foreground.

Lighting Effects

Within this view, the site, where visible is seen as part of the unlit semi-natural green landscape which extends away from the A465 towards the lower slopes of the Bloreng. Although the dual carriageway itself is not lit, the view is influenced by the infrastructure corridor which cuts across it and the lighting elements associated with the built form including the recycling centre floodlights and the elevated lit signage for the fast food restaurant and hotel. Lighting associated with the isolated dwellings on Bloreng slopes will also be visible.



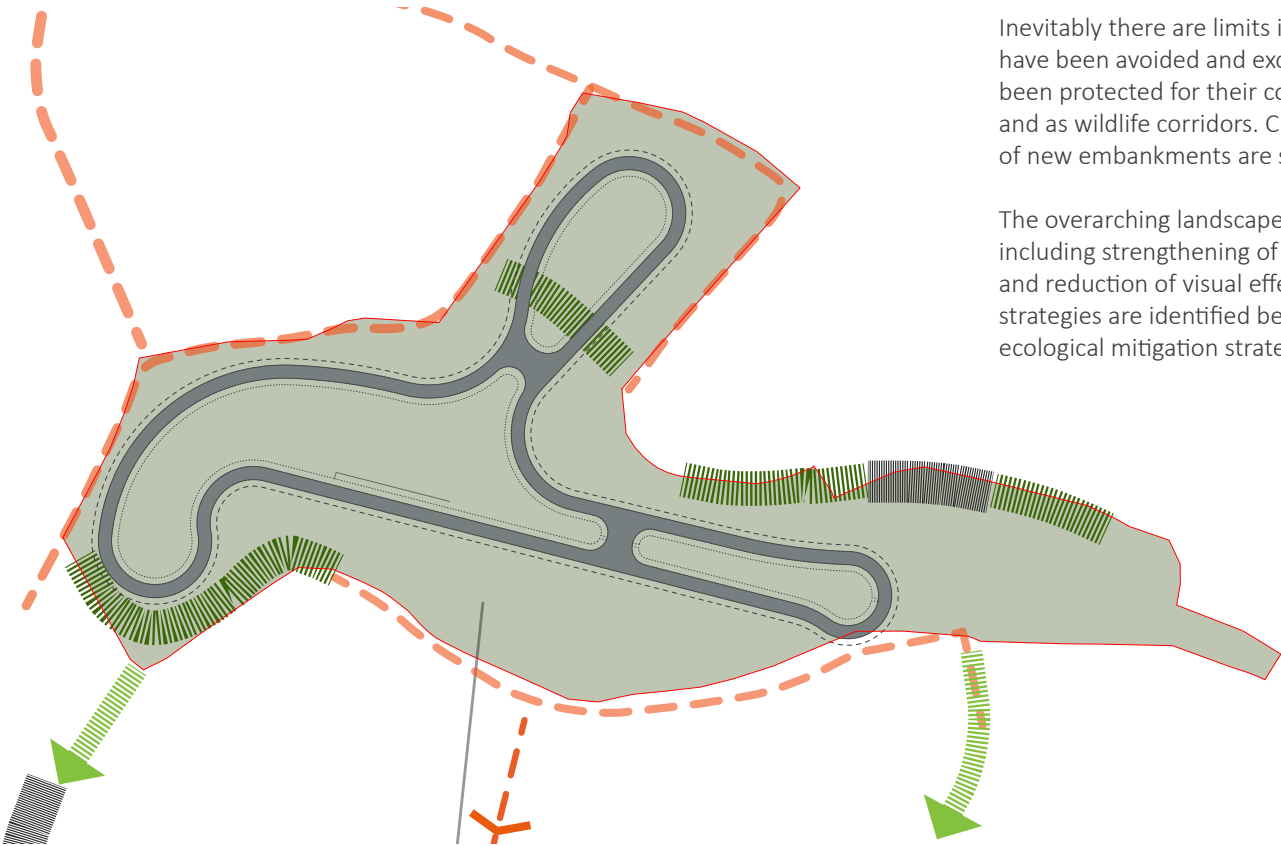


# 7.0 Mitigation Through Design

The baseline studies described above provide a sound basis for the development of a robust mitigation strategy to inform all aspects of the design.

Inevitably there are limits in the routing of the track, however important habitats have been avoided and exclusion zones have been achieved. Boundary hedges have been protected for their contribution to landscape character and visual containment and as wildlife corridors. Cut and fill has been balanced across site and the gradients of new embankments are such that they can support further screen planting.

The overarching landscape framework delivers all remaining mitigation aspirations including strengthening of landscape character, enhancement of biodiversity linkages and reduction of visual effects. The key landscape character and visual mitigation strategies are identified below. Refer to Ecologist's details for further information on ecological mitigation strategies.



A: Landscape Character Enhancement & Mitigation

## A: Landscape Character Enhancement and Mitigation :

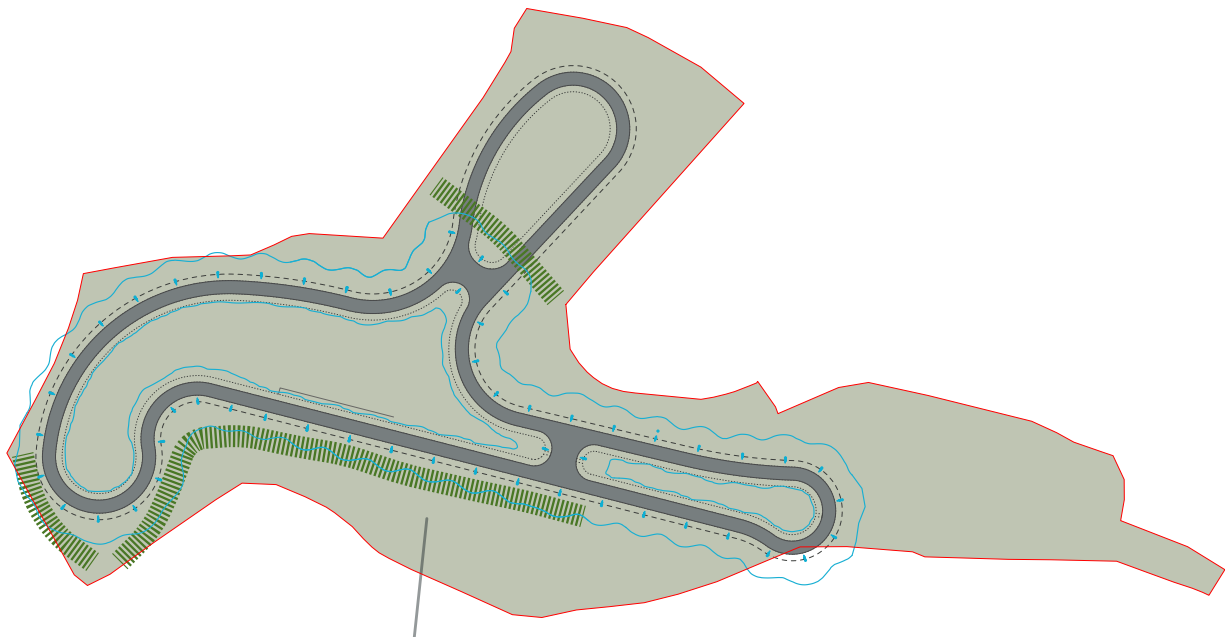
Key enhancement objectives are to strengthen existing vegetation features and to form new linkages between existing features including infill planting to hedgerows and low level planting along the flood-plain margin. These 'Green Infrastructure' linkages would strengthen landscape character, provide visual filtering and form important wildlife corridors. Largely linear blocks have been introduced in response to the local field network character and pockets of planting extend existing hedge-lines. Open 'field like' zones have been retained such as the 'western field' and the 'eastern meadow slopes' which fall to meet the floodplain.

## B: Lighting Mitigation:

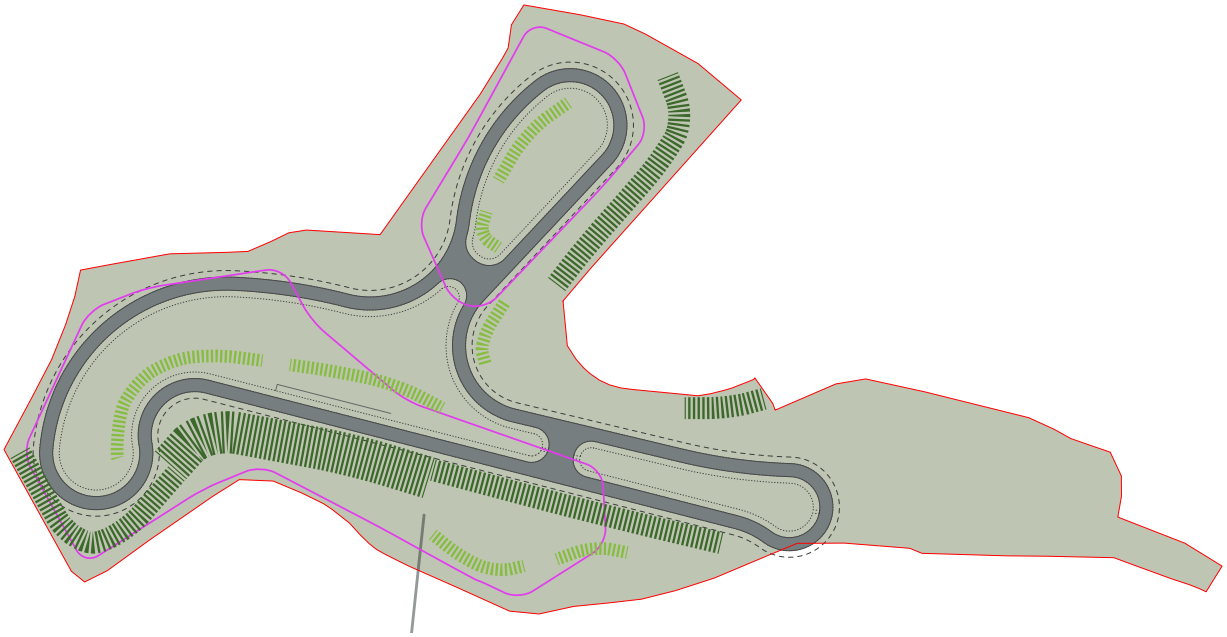
Baseline studies have revealed that the introduction of lighting across the site would be necessary for evening events. To help reduce visual effects, light column heights have been minimised to 5m, lux levels are minimised and lighting is directional with louvres preventing back-lighting. Belts of planting have also been introduced to filter views. Planting runs along the western bank of the cycle track to the landfill embankment, and across the eastern arm of the track. Beyond this point, lighting has been omitted so that the 'western field', which was visible from many of the viewpoints, remains largely free of light and taller features. Track use in the evening will exclude the western field.

## C: Visual Mitigation:

In addition to the robust belts of planting described above, which will provide visual filtering of the track, smaller pockets of planting have been introduced across the site where they would provide a softening of the new embankments particularly at the transition between new and existing topography. Where attractive views to the wider upland setting are available, a careful balance has been struck between filtering views of the track and retaining those wider views, such as adjacent to the Nursing Home.



B: Lighting Mitigation



C: Visual Mitigation





- 1 Opportunity to strengthen green infrastructure corridor along A465 with native woodland planting buffer linking around the south of the recycling centre
- 2 Opportunity to strengthen and infill green infrastructure corridors linking across the site with native tree and hedgerow planting, including potential for dispersed fruit trees
- 3 Opportunity to create increased wetland/buffer areas adjacent to the pond and ditches, providing additional amphibian habitat/connectivity and potential for integrated sustainable drainage features
- 4 Opportunity to create increased ecological diversity within the grassland swards across the site including field margin wildflower mixes and sloping banks managed as wildflower meadows
- 5 Opportunity to create a filtering of views between the main body of the site and the northern, more urbanised zone and to soften views between the care home and recycling centre

- 6 Opportunity to improve pedestrian access into the site, create linkages to existing footpaths where possible and introduce clear signage. Scrub clearance at entrance points and replacement of styles with more accessible gates.
- 7 Opportunity to improve accessibility to existing pond, including selective thinning of encroaching scrub to increase visibility of water and provision of a boardwalk to direct visitors away from, and over, sensitive habitats and SuDS basins
- 8 Potential future opportunities to create additional footpaths and boardwalked sections providing access to the River Usk floodplain, habitat interpretation boards, informal seating, natural play features and possible additional links to PROWs
- 9 Recognition of need to retain key views to the wider setting whilst factoring in the need for potential filtering of available views of the proposals at site high point
- 10 Recognition of visually enclosed area with limited view from surrounding area.

## Abergavenny Velo Park: Green Infrastructure Needs & Opportunities







## 8.0 Predicted Effects : Landscape Character

### Local Landscape Character Area 1: Infrastructure Corridor (Sensitivity: Very Low)

The northern part of the site sits within this character area, whilst the remainder of the site sits within the adjacent Llanfoist Lowlands LLCA.

The introduction of a new access point, combined footpath cycle-path link, parking facilities, lighting and associated infrastructure within a small part of LLCA1 will increase the footprint of hard-standings reduce the area of open space and introduce more activity. However, it is considered that the change will introduce elements which are characteristic of the existing busy and varied LLCA. There are no mature trees within the open space that will be developed so that the greening influence it has on the LLCA is limited.

The landscape proposals associated with the development aim to strengthen the landscape structure within this LLCA and to link new planting with existing vegetation which is adjacent, beside the fast food restaurant and on the landfill embankment.

The introduction of the remainder of the proposals including the closed loop cycle track, lighting, fencing, embankments, drainage, landscaping and activity on the development site will have a very minor impact on those areas of the Infrastructure Corridor Character Area which have a visual interrelationship with the site. From the A465 dual carriageway there will be a small increase in the zone of urbanising influences and activity levels. However for the majority of this varied LLCA, the development adjacent to the recycling centre and mixed use development, will have a very limited influence on the heavily urbanised and industrial nature of the LLCA . This influence will be further reduced over time as landscaping reduces the inter-visibility between the site and the LLCA.

It is therefore considered that the proposals would introduce a minor change in a localised setting of the LLCA where the effects on the landscape character would be slight and the change would be not uncharacteristic of the setting. Additionally, mitigation planting would help to reduce the inter-visibility of parts of the development over time.

The resultant Magnitude of Landscape Effects would be low in the construction phase with associated earth-works and construction activity, leading to VERY LOW in the medium to long term. The resultant Landscape Effect in this LLCA with very low sensitivity, is NEGLIGIBLE in the long term.

### Local Landscape Character Area 2: River Usk Riparian Meadows (Sensitivity: High)

The site's influence on this LLCA is currently limited to the south and east, where the site's semi-improved grassland drops down sharply to meet the River Usk floodplain and it is this transition which defines the western extent of the River Usk Riparian Meadows LLCA. There is no visual interrelationship between the LCA and the remainder of the site.

As a result the development's influence on the landscape character of LLCA2 is limited to the introduction of the southern and eastern section of track, lighting, fencing and landscaping and the necessary embankment works which would be necessary to achieve the required track alignment.

The sharp drop in level from the site to the floodplain would be retained but would be narrower in extent with the track cutting across the top of the slope and native screen planting introduced below the track. The mitigation planting would help to screen the track and lighting in the long term, but in the short term the track and lighting would introduce urbanising influences into the southern portion of the LLCA (south of the A465). In the south-eastern corner, where the track descends across the slope and loops around to the west, it is likely that sections of the track would remain visible over the long term.

Taking into consideration that the landfill embankment and central high-point screens a large proportion of the site, it is considered that the built form which would be introduced alongside a localised section of LLCA2 would create substantial change to the natural character of the affected section of LLCA, but as the eastern belt of mitigation planting matures, the influence of the track would reduce. It is also noted that only a small proportion of the wider LLCA is affected. Therefore the Magnitude of Landscape Effects is considered to be MEDIUM being a change in landscape character in a localised area of the LLCA2 which partially affects key features of the LLCA in the long term.

The resultant Landscape Effect in LLCA2 with high sensitivity, is Substantial falling to MODERATE in the long term as the landscaping matures.

### Local Landscape Character Area 3: Llanfoist Lowlands (Sensitivity: Medium)

The construction of the proposed cycle track, lighting, fencing, embankments, drainage and landscaping within a part of the Llanfoist Lowlands Landscape Character Area (LLCA3) will introduce urbanising features and activity into an open rolling semi-agricultural landscape and create a series of man-made embankments across the rolling landscape. Although there would be no built form and large areas of open green space would be retained, the track, lighting and embankments will erode the open character of this part of LLCA3.

The landscaping proposals also aim to minimize the impact of the new embankments by feathering in the transition zones, introducing belts and pockets of planting to prevent extensive views of the transition zones and by proposing the management of grassland areas as wildflower meadow which would help blend the transitions as well as increase biodiversity.

It is noted that the site's boundary hedgerows, which are characteristic of the LLCA, create a buffering effect between the site and the wider LLCA. The landscape proposals aim to strengthen the boundary hedgerows and support this buffering, ultimately helping to localise any landscape effects to the immediate site. In addition, the lines of existing hedgerows are utilised as a template to 'extend' pockets of planting across the site where they will help to partially subdivide the track into smaller 'field' patterns which would help to assimilate the proposals into the character area where perceived from the elevated LLCA to the south.

It is therefore considered that the proposals, including mitigation planting, will introduce a moderate change in key landscape character over a focused area of LLCA3, contained strongly by boundary hedgerows. Over the long term, planting will help to soften the change and the Magnitude of Landscape Effects is therefore considered to be LOW. When combined with the medium sensitivity of LLCA3, this in turn will give rise to a Minor overall Landscape Effect falling to NEGLIGIBLE in the long term as the landscaping matures.



**Local Landscape Character Area 4: Bloreng Lower Slopes & Goytre Canal-side (Sensitivity: High)**

From the elevated slopes of the Bloreng Lower Slopes & Goytre Canal-side (LLCA4), the development of the closed loop track and infrastructure will introduce visible and urbanising features across the site and would effectively extend the development associated with Llanfoist eastwards to meet the floodplain and closer towards the character area LLCA4. However, as the fields of the Llanfoist Lowlands LLCA wrap around the site to sit between the site and LLCA4, the open setting of LLCA4 will be retained and from the elevated and open parts of the character area, the panoramic views and sense of exposure that is experienced will be unchanged and the site will remain a very small influence on the wider setting, even with urbanising features. Additionally, new landscaping will help to filter views of the development and linear belts and pockets across the site are intended to work with the field pattern adjacent to the site, which would be apparent from the higher elevations of LLCA4.

It is therefore considered that the development of the closed loop cycle track and associated infrastructure will have a very limited influence on the ‘open, exposed’ landscape character of parts of LLCA4 and that for those parts of LLCA4 which are enclosed and introverted (the Goytre Canal and lanes) there will be no impact on landscape character at all.

It is therefore considered that the change introduced by the development would lead to a moderate change over a focused part of the LLCA where the change would have a limited influence on the key ‘exposed’ character. This would result in a LOW Magnitude of Landscape Effects, which would in turn, give rise to a moderate Landscape Effect in the LLCA which has been ascribed a high sensitivity as a result of its partial status as a world heritage site. This would fall to MINOR in the long term as the landscaping matures.

**Local Landscape Character Area 5: Ysgyryd Fach Lower Slopes (Sensitivity: Very Low)**

As a result of the lack of visual interrelationship between the site and the Ysgyryd Fach Lower Slopes Character Area (LLCA5), the development site exerts little influence on this character area.

It is therefore considered that the development of the closed loop track at Llanfoist would introduce no change to the character of LLCA5 during construction or in the long term. The resulting Magnitude of Landscape Effect is NO CHANGE. This would in turn give rise to a no Landscape Effects in this LLCA, where the Landscape Sensitivity to the development is given as very low.

**Local Landscape Character Area 6: Llanfoist Urban Area (Sensitivity: LOW)**

The construction of the closed loop cycle track and associated infrastructure and the resultant introduction of urbanising features across the site would have limited influence of the Landscape Character of the majority of the Llanfoist Urban Area Character Area (LLCA6) as there is limited inter-visibility.

The key landscape characteristics of LLCA6 are considered to arise from the interrelationship of built form, but it is also noted that the occasional views out to the wider uplands and Usk Valley landscape contribute to overall character.

For the majority of LLCA6 there would be no inter-visibility with the site and therefore the development would exert no influence on Landscape Character. For the housing area which faces the site, the direct and continuous link that exists with the wider rural edge would be partially eroded by the introduction of track and lighting, but this would be reduced to pockets where the site is visible. Much of the site is screened by the intervening dense and overgrown vegetation within the pond and by built form. Within this area of the LLCA the wider visual links with the Bloreng and Usk Valley uplands would be retained after development.

For the nursing home, the immediate relationship between the residential area and the open landscape in the central and southern part of the site would be affected by the introduction of the closed loop track and infrastructure, however there would be possibility to soften the components of the development over time through planting. For the northern part of the site where the nursing home overlooks the Recycling Centre and the infrastructure corridor, the development proposals would introduce landscaping which would provide an increase in the filtering of views between the nursing home and the A465, recycling centre and landfill embankment.

Overall, the changes introduced by the development are considered to give rise to a moderate change over a very focused area of the LLCA with new urbanising features introduced for those areas which directly face the site. However this is balanced with the lack of built form which will be introduced, which will ensure that the existing interrelationship with the wider setting and Usk Valley will be protected. Additionally, the opportunities that are provided to improved accessibility across the site and beyond to the wider footpath network could be considered to give rise to a strengthening of the LLCA’s linkage with the wider setting.

The Magnitude of Landscape Effects is therefore judged as MEDIUM giving rise to a Landscape Effect of MINOR within this LLCA which has been ascribed low landscape sensitivity.

**Local Landscape Character Area 7: Abergavenny Urban Fringe (Sensitivity: VERY LOW)**

Although parts of the site are just discernible from vantage points within this LLCA, they are set against the context of the A465 and Infrastructure corridor. As a result, there is a negligible visual and physical interrelationship between the development site and the Abergavenny Urban Fringe LLCA (LLCA7). It is therefore considered that the site exerts very little influence of this LLCA, which has given rise to its classification as having very low landscape sensitivity to development on the site at Llanfoist.

It is therefore considered that the introduction of the closed loop cycle track and associated infrastructure on the site will introduce no real change to the landscape character of LLCA7 either during construction or in the medium or long term.

The resulting Magnitude of Landscape Effect is therefore given as VERY LOW which in turn gives rise to a Landscape Effect of NEGLIGIBLE.



# 9.0 Predicted Effects : Visual

## 1 : The Sugar Loaf Car Park & Viewing Point (Specific Viewpoint: HIGH sensitivity)

For those visual receptors looking towards Abergavenny and Llanfoist, the newly formed cycle track, lighting columns, fencing and associated wildflower meadow embankments would be just discernible within the view, but although these are urbanising features it is noted that they would be seen in conjunction with mitigation planting and as a narrow strip along the edge of Llanfoist and the A465 infrastructure corridor. Additionally the proposed car parking area would not be visible.

The lack of any proposed buildings, would further reduce the perceived changes within the view and the existing vegetation would remain as visible as it is at present. In particular, the existing mature hedgerow along the western field would still form a robust edge to the site, and would continue to link with the field pattern of the farmland extending beyond.

In addition, the proposed native structure planting would help to soften the new embankments and would, over time, screen the majority of the cycle track.

Taking into account that this viewpoint location is within the National Park and is a ‘Lookout’ point, but also considering that the site is distant, forms a small part of panoramic view, is seen against build form and that mitigation planting would filter out views of the track in the long term, It is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the closed loop cycle track proposals in this location would be VERY LOW.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location within the Brecon Beacons National Park has been assessed as high. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of NEGLIGIBLE significance.

Lighting Effects: The effects of introducing lighting onto the site would not be easily discernible from this viewpoint, partially because of the viewing distance, but also because the site forms a small localised part of well lit environment. Additionally, few receptors would be present during hours when lighting would be in operation to experience any change.

## Viewpoint 2 : The Ysgyryd Ridge (Representative Viewpoint: HIGH sensitivity)

For visual receptors looking towards Abergavenny and Llanfoist from the Ysgyryd ridge, the newly formed track, lighting, fencing and embankments would be just discernible and would extend man-made features eastwards from Llanfoist in line with the landfill embankment and towards Racecourse Farm. However, these new features comprise both urbanising and greening elements, do not include buildings and would retain the overall 'openness' across the site. The proposed car parking would be visible, just beyond the recycling centre and One Planet Centre, but an open grass bank would be retained between the new car park and the nursing home.

All existing vegetation would remain visible and in particular, the mature hedgerow along the western field which wraps round to the south, would still form a robust edge to the site, and continue to link with the field pattern extending beyond.

The proposed native structure planting would help to soften the new embankments and would screen much of the cycle track over time, with the exception of the site's high-point where the 100metre straight would remain partially visible.

Any future native shrub planting across the capped landfill embankment, utilising excess fill from the development, would greatly soften the embankment from this viewpoint although this would not directly screen the development.

As a result of the site's distance from the viewpoint, the small part that it forms in the wider panoramic view and the mitigation planting which would help to filter views of the proposals, it is considered that the proposals would introduce a small change in the view which would not easily be discernible. Therefore the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the closed loop cycle track proposals in this location would be VERY LOW

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location within the Brecon Beacons National Park has been assessed as high. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of NEGLIGIBLE significance.

Lighting Effects: Taking into account the distance of the view and the well lit environment of adjacent Llanfoist the effects of the introduction of lighting onto site would be minimal, although it is noted that the site encroaches into an unlit and open landscape, as opposed to sitting directly alongside the urban fringe. However, the likelihood is that no, or few receptors would be present during hours when lighting would be in operation, so that few would experience any change.

## Viewpoint 3 : The Ysgyryd Fach (Specific Viewpoint: MEDIUM sensitivity)

For those visual receptors looking towards the Bloreng and the eastern edge of Llanfoist, there would be open views of the newly formed cycle track, lighting columns, fencing, and associated embankments. The car parking would be just discernible adjacent to the recycling centre. This would extend man-made features associated with Llanfoist eastwards to meet Racecourse Farm and the edge of the floodplain. Within this ‘facing’ view, the development would encroach onto the open rolling lowland setting to the east of town. However, it is noted that the proposals contain a significant amount of open space and that there are no proposed buildings.

All existing vegetation would remain and would be strengthened by additional structure planting which would link across the site and help to soften the impact of the new embankments. Over time, the majority of the views of the cycle track would be heavily filtered by new planting with the exception of the site's highpoint where sections would remain visible in the long term.

As a result of the direct ‘facing’ nature of the view towards site, the extent that the proposals would be visible ‘across’ the view and the potential for the proposals to extend the influence of man-made features towards the floodplain; but also considering mitigation planting that would filter views over time and the panoramic nature of the view, it is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be MEDIUM being a clear change to the view, but not one which would form the focus and also that mitigation would be possible in the long term. The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location within the Brecon Beacons National Park has been assessed as medium. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of MODERATE ADVERSE significance.

Lighting Effects: The introduction of lighting onto the site would extend the lighting associated with Llanfoist across the view into an unlit landscape, however, the likelihood is that few receptors would be present during hours when lighting would be in operation, so that few would experience any change.



**Viewpoint 4 : The Bloreng Ridge (Representative Viewpoint: HIGH sensitivity)**

For those visual receptors looking towards the site from the Bloreng ridge-line there would be elevated, open and full views over the newly formed cycle track, lighting columns, fencing, car park areas and associated meadow embankments. The proposals would extend the man-made features associated with Llanfoist eastwards to meet Racecourse Farm and the River Usk floodplain. However, from this viewpoint the recycling centre and landfill form a notable part of the setting of Llanfoist and the site itself is closely associated with the edge of the landfill embankment, lying between the landfill and Llanfoist. As a result, it is assessed that the development, with its open character, ground level infrastructure and mitigation planting, would not significantly detract from the visual setting of the town from this viewpoint.

All existing vegetation would be retained and strengthened with additional structure planting which would link across the site and soften the impact of the new track and embankments. Over time, the majority of the views of the track would be filtered through new planting with the exception of the site’s high-point where sections would remain fully visible in the long term.

As a result of the site’s visual association with the landfill site, the small part that the site forms in the wider panoramic view and the mitigation plating which would be introduced to help filter views, but also noting the elevated nature of the viewpoints and the fact that lengths of the cycle track would remain visible in the long term, it is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the closed loop cycle track proposals in this location would be MEDIUM. There would be a substantial and partially irreversible change to a relatively small part of the view. The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location within the Brecon Beacons National Park has been assessed as high. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of substantial adverse significance in the short term, but falling to MODERATE ADVERSE in the long term as the proposed landscaping matures and screens the development.

Lighting Effects: Introduction of lighting onto a small localised area alongside the urban fringe a would extend the lighting associated with Llanfoist to a minor degree. The likelihood is that no receptors would be present during hours when lighting would be in operation, so that few, if any would experience any change.

**Viewpoint 5 : The Bloreng Car Park and Look Out Point (Specific Viewpoint: HIGH sensitivity)**

For those visual receptors looking towards Abergavenny and over the eastern edge of Llanfoist from this parking area and viewing area, there would be open and elevated views of the newly formed cycle track, lighting columns, fencing, car parking and associated meadow embankments. This would extend the man-made features associated with Llanfoist to the southeast and within the context of this ‘narrow’ viewpoint the proposals would encroach onto the open setting of the town. However, it is noted that the proposals comprise both urbanising and greening features, do not include buildings or encroach onto the floodplain and retain open green embankments across the site.

All existing vegetation would remain and would be strengthened by additional structure planting which would link across the site and help to soften the new embankments. Over time, views of the cycle track would be filtered by vegetation but would remain largely visible from this elevated viewpoint.

As a result of the elevated nature of this viewpoint, the site’s location in the middle distance and the long term visibility of the cycle track even with planting, but also accepting the panoramic nature of the view, it is considered that the proposals would introduce a clear change to the view with new elements being noticeable but that the change would not be the main focus of the view. Therefore, the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be MEDIUM.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location within the Brecon Beacons National Park has been assessed as high. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of substantial adverse significance in the short term, but falling to MODERATE ADVERSE in the long term as the proposed landscaping matures and screens the development.

Lighting Effects: Introduction of lighting onto a small localised area alongside the urban fringe a would extend the lighting associated with Llanfoist to a minor degree. The likelihood is that no receptors would be present during hours when lighting would be in operation, so that few, if any would experience any change.

**Viewpoint 6 : Lower Bloreng Slopes PROW (Representative Viewpoint: MEDIUM sensitivity)**

For those visual receptors looking towards Site from the PROW which crosses the lower Bloreng slopes, there would be elevated, open views over site from higher points of the PROW. The proposed track, infrastructure and 5m lighting columns, set at 20m intervals, would be visible where they run over the site’s highpoint. A light grey colour is proposed for the lighting to assist in their screening. It is noted that from this viewpoint the proposals would be seen against the backdrop of the landfill site. As the proposed landscaping matures the level of visual screening would be strengthened. From lower elevations, intervening vegetation would screen more of the site’s ground level so that a large proportion of the proposals would not be visible, particularly in the summer months. As a result, it is assessed that the development, with its open character, predominantly ground level infrastructure and mitigation planting, would not significantly detract from the visual setting of the town from this viewpoint.

All existing vegetation would be retained and additional planting would soften the impact of any visible areas of new track and embankments. Over time, the majority of the views of the track would be heavily filtered by planting with the exception of the site’s high-point where sections would remain partially visible in the long term.

Considering the majority of the proposals will not be visible within this view, even in the winter months, but accepting that a small portion of the track and associated infrastructure will remain visible at the site’s high-point, introducing urbanising features into the open rolling lowlands which form the setting to the eastern edge of town, it is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be MEDIUM because there would be a substantial and irreversible change to a small part of the view. The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location has been assessed as medium. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of MODERATE ADVERSE significance.

Lighting Effects: The introduction of lighting onto the site would extend the brightness associated with Llanfoist to a notable degree from this viewpoint. The likelihood is that no receptors would be present on the PROW during hours of lighting operation, so that few, if any would experience change. However, there would be a change to the view for those dispersed dwellings who overlook the site.

**Viewpoint 7 : Monmouthshire Golf Course (Representative View: HIGH sensitivity)**

From this low lying viewpoint, the majority of the site is screened from view by landform. Only the southern tip of the proposed track, lighting, fencing and ground-modelling would be visible as it loops around the high-point and runs northwards along the site’s south-western boundary. However, although only a small portion of the proposals are visible, the introduction of the track and lighting columns into an otherwise open, natural view would have an urbanizing effect. Over time the proposed planting would soften views, but the lighting columns are likely to remain visible on the skyline and sections of track would be visible at close range.

As a result of the proximity of the view and open setting, elements of the proposals will remain visible even as the mitigation planting matures; however, no buildings would be introduced. It is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be HIGH, bringing a substantial and irreversible change to a large part of the view with new and dominant elements introduced which would not be fully screened by new planting.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location, at close range, has been assessed as high. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of substantial adverse significance in the short term, but falling to MODERATE in the long term as the proposed landscaping matures and screens the development.

Lighting Effects: The introduction of lighting on site would have a significant effect within this unlit viewpoint. For the PROW it is likely that no receptors would be present to experience change when lighting would be in operation. However, for the adjacent farmhouses lighting would introduce significant change in the view.

**Viewpoint 8 : Public Footpath Running alongside School: (Representative Viewpoint) MEDIUM sensitivity)**

For those visual receptors walking along this PROW, the majority of the proposals would not be not visible. Only glimpses of the new track and fencing would be available as the track runs parallel with the site’s adjacent boundary, albeit through gaps in the hedgerow. Even so, these glimpses would have an urbanising influence at such close range. No lighting columns are proposed along this section of track.

Over time, the proposed mitigation structure planting would filter out all remaining views of the track and fencing leaving only the potential for occasional views of the top of the proposed lighting columns further to the east in the centre of the site.

Although this close range viewpoint is within an open landscape , it is considered that as a result of the limited visibility of the proposals and the possibility for mitigation planting, the proposals would only introduce a small change in the view, with elements being noticeable but not immediately apparent. The Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals would therefore be LOW.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location has been assessed as medium, in turn resulting in overall Visual Effects of minor adverse significance in the short term, but falling to NEGLIGIBLE in the long term as the proposed planting matures.

Lighting: The introduction of lighting on site would have a significant effect within this unlit viewpoint. However, it is likely that no receptors would be present to experience change when lighting would be in operation.



**Viewpoint 9a : PROW, North Ffyordd Sain Ffwyst (Rep. View: HIGH sensitivity)**

For walkers on the PROW, there will be views of the track as it loops around the northern extent and as it crosses the high point and loops around the western field. In all these available views the associated fencing, lighting and embankments will also be discernible. All existing boundary vegetation would be retained.

In all available views of the track, they are filtered through the dense vegetation of the pond. During leaf-out, views will be heavily filtered and glimpsed. At the site’s high-point, the site forms the skyline for a short stretch and the proposed lighting columns would break the skyline, increasing their prominence.

Given that the pond vegetation and the Blorengel are key points of interest in the view and that the site forms a strip of land seen through vegetation, it is considered that the proposals will introduce new elements and a clear change to the view but will not form the full focus of the view, particularly in leaf out. In addition, the new planting will soften the embankments and filter views of the track and associated infrastructure. It is therefore considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from the development would be MEDIUM, leading to overall Visual Effects of substantial adverse significance falling to MODERATE/MINOR ADVERSE in the long term.

Lighting Effects: The introduction of lighting on site would introduce close range light source into an area of the view which is currently unlit. However lighting is present from the adjacent housing. For the PROW few receptors are likely to be present when lighting would be in operation to experience change, but for adjacent housing there would be a notable change in the view towards site during hours of operation.

**Viewpoint 9b : Care Home (Representative Viewpoint: HIGH sensitivity)**

From this location, a large part of the site is screened from view by vegetation and landform. Only two areas of the cycle track, infrastructure and embankments would be visible, the northern part of the track as it loops around and returns southwards and the western loop as it runs along the upper margins of the western field.

However, although only a small part of the proposals would be visible, the introduction of track, lights, fencing and embankments into an otherwise open, natural view would have an urbanizing influence. Over time the proposed planting would soften views of the proposals, but the lighting columns and fencing are likely to remain visible, even if partially filtered through new groups of planting.

It is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be MEDIUM. There would be a clear change to the view, with new urbanising elements in two points of an otherwise open view. But the vertical elements are limited to post and rail fencing and 5m high lighting columns at 20m intervals and there is opportunity to screen/ filter views of parts of the track.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location, at close range and highly attuned to the view, has been assessed as high. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of substantial adverse significance in the short term, falling to MODERATE/ MINOR ADVERSE in the long term as the proposed landscaping matures and screens the development.

**Lighting** : The introduction of lighting on site would introduce close range light source into a part of the view which is currently unlit. However lighting is present from the adjacent housing and recycling centre. There would, however, be a notable change in the view towards site during hours of operation.

**Viewpoint 9C : Ffordd Sain Ffwyst Looking South East (Representative Viewpoint: VERY HIGH sensitivity)**

From this location, a large part of the site is screened from view by vegetation, built form and landform. Only two areas of the cycle track and associated infrastructure/ ground-modelling would be visible, the northern part of the track as it loops around and the western loop as it runs along the upper margins of the western field.

However, although only a small portion of the proposals are visible, the introduction of the track, lighting columns fencing and embankments into an otherwise open and natural view would have an urbanizing influence. Over time the proposed planting would soften the views and the embankments, but the lighting columns and fencing are likely to remain visible, even if partially filtered through new groups of planting.

It is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be MEDIUM. There would be a clear change to the view with new urbanising elements into two points of this otherwise open view, but the vertical elements are limited to post and rail fencing and 5m high lighting columns at 20m intervals and there would be opportunity to introduce mitigation planting to screen and filter views of parts of the track and associated infrastructure.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location, at close range, has been assessed as very high. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of substantial adverse significance in the short term, but falling to MODERATE/MINOR ADVERSE in the long term as the proposed landscaping matures and screens the development.

Lighting: The introduction of lighting on site would introduce close range light source into a part of the view which is currently unlit. However lighting is present from the adjacent housing and nursing home. There would, however, be a notable change in the view towards site during hours of operation.

**Viewpoint 10 : Residential View from Langpen Drive (Representative Viewpoint: LOW sensitivity)**

From this location, the majority of the proposals would be screened behind intervening built form and vegetation. The only section of the proposals which would be glimpsed, is the upper section of track running across the western field. Even here, the available glimpses would be filtered through vegetation and only available in the winter. Where views are possible they would be of the track, fencing and embankments required to maintain constant gradients across the track.

Over time, the proposed screen planting would provide increased filtering of the views of the track and soften the appearance of the newly formed embankments.

As a result of the limited visibility, potential for mitigation planting and the busy nature of the land-use in the foreground, it is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be VERY LOW introducing change which would be very small and not easily discernible.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location, at close range, has been assessed as low. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of NEGLIGIBLE significance in the short term, falling to no change in the long term as the proposed landscaping matures and the development is almost entirely screened.

Lighting: The introduction of lighting on site would create a very small change in the view during hours of operation as the site is set against a well lit environment.

**Viewpoint 11: Residential View from Gobannian Way (Representative Viewpoint: LOW sensitivity)**

From this location, the majority of the proposals would be screened behind the landfill embankment and intervening vegetation. The only section of track and associated infrastructure which could be glimpsed, is a short section as it crosses the site’s highpoint. Even for this short section the available glimpses would be filtered through existing and proposed vegetation and only available in the winter months. Not enough of the site’s natural landform is visible to enable the newly graded embankments to be perceived as an altered landform.

Over time, the proposed screen planting would provide increased filtering of the views of the track in the winter months.

As a result of the very limited visibility the additional mitigation planting that is possible and the busy nature of the land-use in the foreground of the view containing the elevated A465, it is considered that the level of change introduced by the introduction of a closed loop cycle track would be very small and not easily discernible. The resultant Magnitude of Visual Effects would be VERY LOW.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location has been assessed as low. This would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of negligible significance in the short term, falling to NO CHANGE in the long term as the proposed landscaping matures and screens the development.

Lighting: The introduction of lighting on site, where it would be partially visible on the rising ground to the site’s highpoint, would create a small change in the view, extending lighting from Llanfoist into an otherwise dark landscape extending to the Blorengel. It is noted that houses are orientated away from the view, so that views would be oblique.

**Viewpoint 12: Abergavenny Castle (Specific Viewpoint: MEDIUM sensitivity)**

From this location, the majority of the proposals would be screened from view behind landform, built form and intervening vegetation. Only two small sections of track and associated infrastructure would potentially be glimpsed, as it crosses the site’s highpoint and across a small part of the western field. Even here, glimpses would only be available in winter. During leaf out all views would be screened by intervening vegetation. Not enough of the site’s natural landform is visible to enable the newly graded embankments for the track to be perceived as an altered landform.

Over time, the proposed screen planting would provide increased filtering of the available views of the track in the winter months.

As a result of the very limited visibility, potential for mitigation planting and the busy nature of the land-use in the foreground, it is considered that the Magnitude of Visual Effects arising from introduction of the proposals in this location would be VERY LOW introducing a small change which would not easily be discernible.

The sensitivity of visual receptors in this location has been assessed as medium which would in turn result in overall Visual Effects of NEGLIGIBLE significance.

**Lighting**: The introduction of lighting on site would introduce a thin strip of additional lighting between the floodlit recycling centre and the 3 story nursing home, filtered through intervening vegetation. As the castle would be closed to public at night, it is likely that very few receptors would experience this small change.



# 10.0 Conclusions

## The Proposals and Site Context

The development proposals are set out in more detail in the Design and Access Statement. However in summary they comprise the provision of a closed road cycle track (CRC) and associated access, parking, ground modelling, sustainable drainage and lighting, set within an accessible, open and attractive landscape. The establishment of a robust landscape framework is integral to the proposals and will provide strengthened Green Infrastructure and landscape and visual mitigation as informed by the Landscape and Visual Impact Studies.

In broad terms the site is located within the low lying, landscape which sits just above and to the west of the River Usk floodplain, adjacent to the urban edges of Llanfoist and Abergavenny and the transport corridors of the A465 and A40. The wider surrounding landscape includes the upland areas of the Brecon Beacons National Park and the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site and strong inter-visibility exists between the site and these landscapes.

The site covers approximately 6.4ha of undulating scrub and grazing land. A localised high point in the centre falls to the landfill embankment and recycling centre in the north and east, to an overgrown pond in the west, and to a network of fields in the south. Along the western boundary, the urban edge of Llanfoist comprises housing, a nursing home, hotel and drive through restaurant. Vehicular access into the site is possible from the road which serves the Recycling Centre.

A number of utility constraints cross the site including a high voltage overhead power line which bisects the northern part of the site, a foul sewer which crosses site in a north-south and east-west alignment and a 12m wide gas easement which crosses the site along a north-south axis.

Existing vegetation and Green Infrastructure assets of note consist of native, unmanaged boundary hedgerows interspersed with trees, together with a small group of Category C trees in the centre of the site and a mature Category A Oak adjacent to the Care Home. The remainder of the site consists of semi-improved grassland with areas of encroaching scrub, particularly in the north of the site. A number of boundaries are open and marked by low fencing.

The site has been the subject of a tree survey which was carried out in March 2020 and a Preliminary Ecological Assessment which was carried out in July 2019. Both reports have informed this document. Ongoing ecological surveys are being carried out at this time. The site is not currently the subject of any national or local designations or Tree Preservation Orders.

Two Public Rights of Way cross the site linking Llanfoist with the wider countryside. Access improvements could be made by way of vegetation clearance and improved wayfaring and gates.

Pre-application discussions have been held with Monmouthshire County Council to agree the methodology for this study along with the selection of viewpoints and Local Landscape Character Areas for assessment.

## Mitigation

Given the protected status of elements of the landscape setting and the landscape and ecological assets across the site, careful consideration has been given to any potential landscape and visual impacts and strategies have been sought to limit them.

Landscape framework proposals have been designed to provide the following mitigation

- Planting to help soften views of the new track and associated grading works, and to accommodate circulation and drainage features within a naturalised setting.
- Alignment of the CRC to limit impact on the site’s existing Green Infrastructure assets and to retain a landscape buffer around the boundary of the site.
- Alignment of the CRC in order to minimise cut and fill within a folding landscape and to site the track as close as possible to existing grade.
- Design of cuttings and embankments so that the interface between new and existing ground profiles would be softened by ‘feathering in’ and so slopes could support screen planting.
- Development of a lighting strategy which excludes lighting close to residential areas and important habitats, incorporates reduced height and grey coloured columns, back cut off louvres to reduce light spill and use of warm white LEDs.
- Provision of screen plant to filter view of lighting.
- Establishment of wildflower meadows to soften the slopes.
- Retention of the majority of the existing trees and hedgerows on site.
- A 10m exclusion buffer around the existing pond habitat where no grading, walls or hard surfacing would occur.
- Along with protection of existing green infrastructure assets, native infill planting to boundary hedgerows and new planting to improve connectivity and provide a strong filtering of views from surrounding areas.
- All screen planting has been designed to support landscape character. Linear blocks are shown in response to the local field network and existing hedgerow lines are extended across site. Open ‘fields’ are created such as the ‘western field’ and the ‘eastern meadow slopes’ which meet the floodplain.
- Rainfall runoff would be collected and conveyed in existing and proposed ditches and attenuated in shallow basins. New basins would be profiled to form a ‘natural’ appearance and appropriate wet meadow mixes would be sown.

Other Green Infrastructure improvements have been designed including:

- Low native scrub planting in the northern zone, where overhead power lines constitute a constraint to tree planting. Forming stronger northern boundary GI linkages to planting along the A465.
- Native planting would be undertaken across the site where possible to improve internal GI infrastructure and create a new linkages.
- Wildflower margins would be established along the boundaries of the site and would act as an interface between boundary hedgerows and the active areas of the site and would provide additional wildlife value in place of amenity grass.
- In order to maximise the ability for visitors and the local community to experience the site, the proposals include a series of footpaths across the site. The design ensures that all existing public rights of way will remain fully accessible at all times, even during race days. Additional access is opened up where safely possible.



Landscape Effects

Following a process of site analysis and desk top study, the area surrounding the site has been categorised into seven Local Landscape Character Areas. The character areas range from ‘urban centre’ to ‘open and natural upland’ as a result of the site’s location on the urban fringe. Each character area has been evaluated in terms of the effect that the CRC development could have on landscape character.

Of the seven landscape character areas assessed, six were found to have either Minor, Negligible or No Change residual effects on landscape character.

For most of character areas, the resultant effect was reduced by mitigation planting and by the detailed layout of elements such as lighting (including omission of lighting for the western field) and the form of screen planting in response to local landscape character.

For the remaining Local Landscape Character Area, the River Usk Riparian Meadows Landscape Character Area, the development was deemed to have a substantial landscape effect on a localised part of the character area. This related to the length of track and lighting which runs close to the floodplain in the south-east of the site. In the long term, the residual effect is reduced to Moderate as the proposed landscaping matures and helps to reduce the prominence of the track, lighting and embankment.

Visual Effects

After a process of site survey and theoretical modelling of visibility, fourteen viewpoints were selected for assessment with regard to visual effects. Viewpoints included three locations alongside the urban edge of Llanfoist with direct views over site, four sites in the Brecon Beacons National Park, one of which is also within the Blaenavon World Heritage Site.

Of the fourteen viewpoints assessed, six were considered to have 'Negligible' or 'No' effects as a result of limited inter-visibility or limited ‘sensitivity to change’ of the receptors.

Of the remaining eight viewpoints, five had 'Moderate' and three had 'Moderate/ Minor' Adverse residual visual effects following mitigation planting. Moderate Adverse effects arose either through the presence of relatively close and elevated views over site, where planting would be less effective at mitigation, or because the ‘sensitivity to change’ was increased in the case of residential views where receptors are judged to be highly attuned to their environment. It is noted however, that even where residual visual effects remain, no buildings are introduced into the main body of the site, so that the wider visual relationship with the surrounding uplands is fully retained.

For a representative selection of those viewpoints judged to have Moderate Adverse residual Visual Effects, photomontages are being prepared to illustrate the proposed development and to provide additional information to inform the Local Planning Authority in their determination of the application. These montages will be issued by the end of November 2020.

Conclusion

Overall, it is considered that the majority of the landscape and visual effects have been mitigated through an iterative process of survey, analysis and design development.

For those residual effects that remain, it is considered that they are balanced by the positive change that will be introduced as a result of the development.

New formal and informal community facilities will be provided and visitor opportunities will be generated, improved footpath linkages will be delivered which will promote more legible visible and accessible linkages with the wider surrounding landscape, strengthened biodiversity linkages will provide improved wildlife habitat value across site and opportunities will be provided for increased visitor interpretation, providing information about wildlife value on site.

Therefore, it is considered that the proposals would be in accordance with National and Local Planning Policy and with Monmouthshire Council’s Green Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Guidance.

November 2020



