



Land at Bradbury Farm, Portskewett

MCC RLDP Promotion of Land for Business/Commercial B1 Use Class and Residential Development

on behalf of Monmouthshire County Council Estate Development Team

Outline Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

prepared by

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Anthony Jellard Associates have been commissioned by Monmouthshire County Council's Estates Development Team (MCC EDT) to prepare an outline landscape and visual appraisal for proposed Business/Commercial B1 Use Class and residential development at Bradbury Farm, Portskewett.
- 1.2 The appraisal will support Stage 2 of the Candidate Sites process as part of Monmouthshire County Council's ongoing review of a replacement/new Local Development Plan (LDP). The LVIA surveys will be used to assess and mitigate for any negative impacts of development in order to promote sustainable development.

2. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 This outline Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment document (LVIA) has been produced, in accordance with the general principles of the current best practice *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment*, Third Edition (2013) published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment.
(We would note that, although guidance from MCC for the Stage 2 Candidate submission is that an 'LVIA' should be prepared in support, our professional view is that a 'Landscape and Visual Appraisal' (LVA) would be more appropriate, since this document forms part of representations to the development of a new LDP; it is not a standalone full planning application and one requiring a formal EIA where an LVIA would be expected.)

Study Area

- 2.2 The study area for the appraisal has been defined in accordance with the guidance provided in the GLVIA 3, which advises that the study area for a landscape assessment needs to cover *'the Site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape context around it which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner'*.
- 2.3 Given the degree of enclosure afforded by woodlands, hedgerows, and topography, which limit views of the complete Site, no significant effects are anticipated beyond 3.0 kms.
- 2.4 Wherever possible, the analysis has been objective, the residual effects quantified, and any subjective judgements have been described in clearly defined terms. Both objective analysis and subjective professional judgements are required for effective, high-quality landscape and visual analysis.

Surveys

- 2.5 Detailed desktop surveys were carried out of published material on the landscape of the Site and its wider context. Material included maps, photographic evidence, historic landscape, and cultural data. Fieldwork enabled the recording of various landscape elements, such as topography, land use and vegetation. From the analysis of this combination of material, it was

possible to carry out an evaluation of landscape character and assess the predicted effects of the proposed development.

Assumptions

- 2.6 Reference to 'the Site' should be interpreted as the area contained within the red line drawn to identify the planning promotion site boundary.
- 2.7 All visual assessment field survey work has been undertaken from within publicly accessible areas only: views from private properties and commercial buildings - where included - are approximate and have been estimated, with reference to the nearest publicly accessible location from which assessment could reasonably take place.

Assessment Viewpoints

- 2.8 A series of viewpoints, based on desktop analysis of mapped information, was selected to be representative of the various groups of receptors whose views may be affected by the proposed development. The focus, when selecting viewpoints, was on '*likely significant effects*' and taking '*an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed*', in line with the GLVIA3 current best practice guidance. These viewpoints were then reviewed in the field and refined as necessary.

Landscape Sensitivity (Susceptibility to Change)

- 2.9 The term 'landscape receptor' means an element or a group of elements which will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Landscape receptors are physical elements or attributes of the landscape that could be affected by the development, such as landscape character, landform, water courses, woodland, groups of trees or hedgerows, land uses and field boundaries.
- 2.10 Landscape receptors are assessed in terms of their 'Landscape Sensitivity'. This combines judgements on the value to be attached to the landscape and the susceptibility to change of the landscape from the type of change or development proposed.
- 2.11 Prior to the advent of the landscape character assessment procedure now used by local authorities, the sensitivity of a given landscape receptor was often defined in terms of landscape value, which took the form of national planning designations - such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - or local designations, such as Areas of Great Landscape Value or Special Landscape Areas. Recent assessment guidance has placed greater emphasis on those landscapes which do not benefit from national or local designations, but which may be valued locally for particular reasons.
- 2.12 The sensitivity of landscape receptors is defined in *Table 1, below*:

Table 1: Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

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

Magnitude of Landscape Effect

- 2.13 The criteria used to assess the magnitude of landscape effects (including those on landscape character and historical landscape character and setting) are based upon the predicted amount of physical change, the geographic extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility, that will occur as a result of the proposals, as described in *Table 2, below*. These are based on best practice examples and experience:

Table 2: Magnitude of Landscape Effect

Category	Description
Major adverse landscape effect	The proposals will be at <i>complete variance</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape, and/or would <i>diminish or destroy</i> the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Moderate adverse landscape effect	The proposals will be <i>at odds</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and/or would cause a <i>noticeable diminution</i> of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Minor adverse landscape effect	The proposals will <i>not quite fit into</i> the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and/or would cause a <i>perceptible diminution</i> of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.

Negligible adverse landscape effect	The proposals will create a <i>barely perceptible diminution of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings</i> .
No change	The proposals will <i>not cause any change</i> to the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape.
Negligible landscape beneficial effect	The proposals will provide a <i>barely perceptible enhancement of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings</i> .
Minor landscape beneficial benefit	The proposals will achieve <i>a degree of fit</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and <i>make a minor contribution to enhancing</i> the character, sense of place or integrity of the landscape.
Moderate landscape beneficial effect	The proposals <i>will fit well</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and would <i>noticeably enhance</i> the character, sense of place or integrity of the landscape.
Major landscape beneficial effect	The proposals <i>will fit very well</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and would <i>restore</i> the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors (Susceptibility to Change)

- 2.14 The term 'visual receptor' means people - individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Visual receptors are at accessible viewpoints, the sensitivity of which would be dependent on the location, the activity of the viewer and the importance of the view. These would include viewpoints available to the users of outdoor facilities, sporting activities and users of public rights of way; viewpoints from landscape features and beauty spots; viewpoints outside local properties (which would represent the view for local residents); and viewpoints available to people travelling through the landscape. Views may be glimpsed and fleeting, or open and sustained.
- 2.15 The determination of the sensitivity of the visual receptors is a matter of professional judgement. The GLVIA3 guidance, recommends that the assessment of sensitivity will be dependent on:
- the location and context of a viewpoint;
 - the expectations and occupation or activity of the viewer;
 - the importance of the view (which may be determined with respect to its popularity, or the numbers of people affected, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, and in the facilities provided for its enjoyment and references to it in literature or art); and
 - the scale of the view and the extent of visibility.

Table 3: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors (Susceptibility to Change)

Sensitivity	Visual Receptor
High	Viewers with a <i>particular interest</i> in their visual environment and/or prolonged viewing opportunities, for example residents, or visitors to National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coasts, or walkers on National Trails.
Medium	Viewers with a <i>general interest</i> in their visual environment; for example, visitors to regionally or locally valued countryside - including Access Land not within a designated landscape - and users of local open space facilities, and walkers or horse riders on locally promoted public rights of way which are not specifically identified for their visual interest.
Low	Viewers with a <i>passing or momentary interest</i> in their everyday surroundings, for example motorists or people at their place of work, whose attention is focused on other activities and who are therefore less susceptible to change.

2.16 The magnitude of visual effects depends on factors such as distance, the time of day, the prevailing weather conditions, elevation, and aspect, as well as the context of the view. The predicted level of effect has been assessed during good visibility and light conditions, therefore with the best possible view of the proposals. Allowance has also been made for the likely visibility of the proposed development during the winter aspect; that is, without the presence of leaves on deciduous vegetation and its consequential contribution to screening effects.

2.17 The following scale has been adopted for assessing the magnitude of visual effect, based on the degree of change to the view, or to the composition - *see Table 4, below*. This is based on best practice examples and previous experience.

Table 4: Magnitude of Visual Effect

Visual Effect Magnitude	Description
Major adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a <i>dominant or complete change</i> to the composition of the view, the appreciation of the landscape character, or the ability to take in or enjoy the view.
Moderate adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a <i>clearly noticeable change</i> to the view, which would affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take in or enjoy the view.
Minor adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a <i>perceptible change</i> to the view, but which would not materially affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character or the ability to take in or enjoy the view.

Negligible adverse or beneficial visual effect	The proposals will cause a <i>barely perceptible change</i> to the view, which would not affect the composition, the appreciation of landscape character, or the ability to take in or enjoy the view.
No change	The proposals will cause no change to the view.

Assessment of Overall Level of Effect

- 2.18 The scale shown in *Table 5, below*, has been adopted to assess the overall level of both landscape and visual effects and whether they are considered to be adverse, beneficial, or neutral. (Neutral effects would be those where there may be a landscape or visual change, but the overall weighting of positive and negative effects is very finely balanced). The basis of this scale is derived from professional experience. In accordance with good practice, the main aim in the reporting of the identified effects is to describe the key landscape and visual issues which are relevant to determining this planning submission; for the purposes of this assessment, such effects are referred to as being *Significant* - which we would define as being of material consideration. In terms of Table 5, below, it is assumed that *moderate* and greater landscape and visual effects are likely to be significant. It should be noted that the term 'residual effects' used in this assessment refers to those effects which are predicted, having taken into account the full extent of the proposed mitigation measures.

Table 5: Assessment of Overall Landscape or Visual Level of Effect

(It should be noted that some of assessment values below, e.g., moderate-minor, are expressed as a continuum. In these instances, our professional judgement is that the assessment of the level of effect is not sufficiently weighted as to be defined by a single value of, say, moderate or minor. Our approach follows GLVIA 3 guidance on the importance of professional judgement in landscape and visual assessment)

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	Medium	Low
Major	Major Adverse/Beneficial	Major-Moderate Adverse/Beneficial	Moderate-Minor Adverse/Beneficial
Moderate	Major-Moderate Adverse/Beneficial	Moderate – Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor Adverse/Beneficial
Minor	Moderate – Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor - Negligible Adverse/Beneficial
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

3 BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 3.1 The baseline condition information is built up by a process which combines the results of desktop research with those of detailed field observation and analysis.

Location and Land Use

- 3.2 The Site is broadly 'L-shaped', with the B4245 forming the eastern boundary and a minor road, which connects Portskewett and Crick, along the western boundary. The M48 road corridor passes the extreme north-western Site boundary. The northern boundary extends to close to the A48.

- 3.3 Modern housing estates on the edges of Caldicot are to the west of Nedern Brook, approximately 0.8 kms from the western Site boundary. On the other side of the minor road leading to Crick, which forms the western Site boundary, is a large area of land occupied by the David Broome Equestrian Centre. The Centre consists of extensive permanent car parking areas, equestrian rings, and associated support buildings.

Topography

- 3.4 The western part of the Site lies on the gently undulating valley floor of the Nedern Brook with elevations varying between approximately 10m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) and 25m AOD.
- 3.5 Ballan Wood and Crown Hill, along with Farthing Hill and Portskewett Hill, form a locally prominent ridge of low hills on the eastern side of the Nedern Brook valley and are included within the Site area (*see Appendix B VP's 1 and 2*).
- 3.6 The land climbs out of the valley and the eastern part of the Site is on a gently sloping plateau, with a high point of around 47m at Killcrow Hill. (*see Appendix B VP's 3, 4 and 6*).
- 3.7 Ground levels on the western side of the Nevern Brook valley are generally less than those to the east but climb in the north-eastern part of Caldicot to around 30m AOD.

Existing Vegetation

- 3.8 Vegetation on the Site primarily comprises Ballan Wood on the sloping valley sides and smaller areas of tree cover on Crown Hill. There are remnant hedgerows, mostly low cut, and a number of individual hedgerow trees.
- 3.9 The woodland on Farthing Hill is a prominent off-Site landscape feature.
- 3.10 The derelict railway line, which once serviced the large Caerwent military area, is just to the west of the David Broome Centre, and has become overgrown with trees and scrub forming a strong landscape belt in the valley and visible in the background of many views west from the Site. There are more distant views from the Site of some of the blocks of woodland and tree belts which enclose Caldicot Castle and its associated Country Park.

Existing Structures

- 3.11 There are several small concrete structures on the Site.

- 3.12 The extensive facilities of the David Broome centre are a short distance beyond the south west Site boundary.
- 3.13 Parts of the north east settlement edge of Caldicot can be seen from the Site to the west.
- 3.14 A solar PV development has been constructed in recent years at Oak Grove, just to the east of Ballan Wood.
- 3.15 Several detached properties, as well as a farm and plant nursery are on the south eastern side of the B4245 near the Site.

Heritage Assets

- 3.16 This LVIA assessment is restricted, in accordance with best practice set out in GLVIA 3rd Edition guidance, to consideration of potential visual effects only on the setting of heritage assets. A full consideration of the effects on designated and non-designated heritage assets is contained in the *Archaeological Assessment* submitted in support of the planning submission. We note that heritage assets relevant to considerations of visual effect on their setting from the proposed development, include Caldicot Castle, Listed Grade 1 and a SAMS This is a 13th-14th century large motte and bailey castle approximately 0.8kms to the south west of the southern tip of the Site.
- 3.16 The Berries Mound & Bailey Castle is an earthworks SAMS between the Nedern Brook and the derelict railway line to the west of the Site.
- 3.17 Mount Ballan is a Listed Grade II house, on the western side of Crick Road close to the western Site boundary.

Public Rights of Way, Open Access Land and Public Open Space

- 3.18 There are two public rights of way within the eastern part of the Site in the area of Killcrow Hill (*see Appendix B VP 7*).
- 3.19 The public footpath network in the vicinity of the Site is comparatively limited. The network includes various footpaths connecting the publicly accessible area of Caldicot Country Park and the eastern edges of Caldicot with the wider footpath network to the north of the M48. Some paths link across the Nedern Brook just north of Mount Ballan and join with the Crick Road on the western Site boundary.
- 3.20 The derelict former Ministry of Defence (MoD) railway line running along the valley is not currently part of the public network (there are plans for this to become a future Sustrans route), although there is significant informal access along parts of its length, particularly close to Portskewett.

Public Roads

- 3.21 The B4245 road linking Portskewett and Caldicot with the A48 to the north passes the eastern boundary of the Site. Some of the access to the development would be off this road.
- 3.22 The extreme north-eastern section of the Site comes close to the A48; access is also proposed from this road.
- 3.23 The minor road between Portskewett and Crick (Crick Road) forms the western boundary of the Site. There would be further site access off this road.
- 3.24 A short section of the M48, running east-west, follows the northern edges of the Site.
- 3.25 The Second Severn Crossing carrying the M4 is approximately 2kms to the south of the Site.

Landscape Character Assessment

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

LANDMAP

- 3.27 The LANDMAP system has been developed specifically for the assessment of character in the landscape of Wales. The system was developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (now Natural Resources Wales) and implemented in partnership with Local Planning Authorities throughout Wales.
- 3.28 It should also be noted that the CCW (NRW) has arrived at a working definition of landscape as follows:

'The physical reality of the environment around us, the tangible elements that give shape and diversity to our surroundings. But landscape is also the environment perceived, predominantly visually but additionally through our senses of smell, touch and hearing. Our appreciation of landscape is affected, too, by our cultural backgrounds, and by personal and professional interests. For the Countryside Council for Wales's purposes, landscape is defined as the sum of all these components.' (CCW, 2001)

- 3.29 We have therefore reviewed the Landscape Character of the Site and its landscape context using the most recent published LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect data. Although there are five Aspects within the LANDMAP data, the LANDMAP methodology for landscape characterisation notes that landscape character areas are to be defined using the Visual & Sensory Aspect Area as a starting point, then refined by examining the data from other Aspects. For the purposes of this outline LVA we have focussed on the Visual and Sensory Aspect layer. However, for the sake of completeness we have included data and initial assessment for other Aspect Layers in *Appendix A to this LVIA*.

- 3.30 LANDMAP places the Site within the Visual and Sensory Aspect Area **Leechpool MNMTHVS04**. This Aspect Area is classified at Level 3 as being *Lowland/Rolling Lowland/Mosaic Rolling Lowland*. The summary description of the land within this character type is quoted below:

'A lowland landscape defined by the M48 and Caldicot to the north and west respectively, whilst merging to the south-east with the Levels. It is a low gently undulating open landscape with long views towards the Second Severn Crossing and the estuary. Irregular medium to large-scale fields of mixed pasture are bounded by a mosaic of low well-maintained hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees; lack of management however has resulted in hedges either being removed or becoming neglected, overgrown and gappy in places. Intrusive lines of post and rail fencing are common, particularly where the fragmentation of farmland has led to a rise in smallholdings and horsiculture. To the south and west, small blocks of deciduous woodland interlink with existing hedges to create a more secluded character. Caldicot Castle to the west reinforces the strong historical connections of this landscape, buffered by the tranquil setting of the Country Park. Settlement is limited to often neglected traditional farmsteads, with scattered linear housing clinging to narrow winding roads, comprising a mixture of modern and traditional, styles and materials'.

- 3.31 LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'Moderate' value. The *Overall Evaluation* notes that this is:

'A semi-rural landscape with pleasing undulating hills acting as an important setting to Caldicot Castle and as a backcloth to the levels. The area is in moderate condition with fairly consistent character although there are instances of locally intrusive development. Its sense of place is defined by Caldicot Castle, the dispersed linear settlement of Leechpool, and views of the estuary. Gently undulating arable and mixed farmland is relatively common in Monmouthshire'.

Monmouthshire Landscape Sensitivity Study Updated 2020.

- 3.32 The original report was commissioned from White Consultants by Monmouthshire County Council in 2008 and reported in October 2009; the report formed part of the evidence base for the current Monmouthshire Adopted Local Development Plan (2014). However, as this study was more than 10 years old, the Council commissioned an update, prepared in October 2020 by the same consultants.
- 3.33 The 2020 Study is an assessment of landscape sensitivity to housing development. There is an updated assessment of the landscape sensitivity of individual Local Landscape Character Areas (LLCA's) around settlements, including Caldicot and Mount Ballan, and then individual sensitivity assessments for Stage 1 Candidate Sites.
- 3.34 The part of the Site east of Ballan Wood and Crown Hill lies within **LLCA MB05**, while to the west and including these woods the Site lies within **LLCA CA01**. The *Key characteristics* of LLCA MB05 are described as:

- *An open and very gently sloping broad ridge with land falling away within the area to the south west.*
- *Rectilinear medium scale fields with fences and degraded low-cut hedges.*
- *Tree cover is very limited with woodland on steep slopes to the west and north west and occasional mature trees along with the B4245 the south.*
- *Farmstead and occasional rural dwellings along adjacent roads.*
- *The area lies the open countryside away from settlements.*
- *The ridgetop is exposed to views to the hills to the north.*
- *The tranquillity is reduced by the adjacent roads the north and south and the openness of the area.*

3.35 While there is mention of solar arrays within the LLCA (the recent substantial MCC development at Oak Grove Farm), there is no comment on their effects on landscape character. Although the siting of the arrays is visually discreet, there is an unavoidable, urbanising change to the landscape character which to some extent reduces landscape sensitivity to further development.

3.36 The MCC report states that the *Landscape and visual sensitivity to housing* for **LLCA MB05** is evaluated as *Medium*, one of the lower sensitivities identified by the Study in Monmouthshire. Under this heading it is noted that:

'The susceptibility of the area lies in its openness allowing views across it, its visibility to higher ground to the north and south west and its location in open countryside away from existing settlement. The value of the area lies in its few hedgerow oaks and hedges and the adjacent SINCS to the west. The LANDMAP value is outstanding for cultural landscape and high for historic landscape'.

3.37 In the data sheet in the report there is the following comment under *Mitigation (if development)*:

'If developed as new settlement screen area from wider view to the north with substantial on Site and Offsite planting belts and on Site green spaces which also help link St Pierre with woodlands to the west and south-west as habitat connections'.

3.38 For **LLCA CA01**, Key characteristics are described as:

- *Valley side, with gentle slopes to the west and rising more steeply to the east.*
- *Primarily pastoral with some arable to the south with medium-sized slightly irregular fields with low-cut hedge boundaries, often with gaps.*
- *Prominent woodland on steep slopes form a positive backcloth and enclosure to the east while there are occasional mature oaks in hedges.*
- *Scattered rural dwellings but dominated by equestrian centre of semi-rural character.*
- *The residential settlement edge is some distance from the area, generally screened by trees, especially around Caldicot Castle.*
- *The upper slopes of the area are visible from Caldicot Castle's towers.*

- *The area is overlooked by the M48 and is moderately open with some views to the wider countryside to the north and to the residential and commercial areas to the south and south west respectively.*
- *The M48 and views of the settlement edge reduces the area's tranquillity.*
- *There is a listed building at Mount Ballan, Caldicot Castle is an SM and a listed building in a Conservation Area directly to the west and there is an SM at The Berries, just to the west.*
- *There is a woodland SINC to the east and there are some small areas in floodplain especially to the north.*

3.39 The *Landscape and visual sensitivity to housing* for LLCA CA01 is evaluated as *High/Medium*. Under this heading it is noted that:

'The susceptibility of the area lies in the area east of Crick Road and around Little Ballan including pastures on rising ground with associated woodland which are locally prominent and of positive landscape character, the clear separation from the settlement across the Nedern Brook valley and the wider setting of Caldicot Castle. The area around Mount Ballan has a semi-rural character which is enhanced by standard oaks. The value of the area lies in the SINC woodland within the area, the PROWs through the area, and relationship with SMs such as the castle to the west. The LANDMAP value is outstanding for cultural landscape and high for historic landscape and geological landscape. If the area was considered for development, the least sensitive part would be the south west quadrant west of Crick Road coinciding with the developed part of the equestrian centre, excluding the sloping fields to the north. However, this area still lies substantially divorced from Caldicot in open countryside'.

3.40 We question the analysis which concludes that the *'least sensitive part'* of LLCA CA01 for development is *the south west quadrant west of Crick Road coinciding with the developed part of the equestrian centre*. Even assuming that this currently developed area could become available at some point in the future for housing, this area lies in the heart of the valley with limited enclosure and is part of the wider setting of Caldicot Castle. Development in the eastern section of this LLCA would be closer to the valley edges and would benefit from the degree of enclosure offered by Ballan Wood and Crown Hill Wood.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act

3.41 A new aspect of the Update Sensitivity Study is a review of each LLCA and Site in terms of whether its attributes contribute to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

3.42 The criteria and factors used in this study are set out in *'Table 4 WBFGA goals criteria'*. However, the methodology for the assessment of each Site seems opaque and arbitrary, with scoring on a simple binary basis, i.e. if they do or do not meet the various goals of the Act in the opinion of the authors. Reviewing the scoring for example for Candidate Site CS0065 in the western part of the Site, and whether or not its attributes contribute to the Act's goals, only the *'resilient Wales'* box is positively ticked. However, we see clear argument for most, if not all, of the goals being ticked, given the positive landscape/'GI-led' approach being taken

to the development by MCC (EDT). In our view, this section of the MCC Sensitivity study fails the tests of transparency and robustness and therefore should not be relied upon when making decisions on Site allocation.

Green Infrastructure Assets

3.43 These are described more fully on the plans supporting this representation. The principal existing assets in the study area include:

- Boundary hedgerows and the wider network of hedgerows in the area;
- The Nedern stream course and smaller ditches which form valuable ecological corridors;
- Ballan Wood and Crown Hill Wood and the wider woodland network;
- The vegetated corridor of the disused former MOD railway line in the valley;
- Established public footpath network in the area;
- Caldicot Castle Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAMS), Conservation Area and Country Park;
- Mount Ballan Listed Building;
- The SAMS Berries Motte and Bailey Castle earthworks to the north-west of the Site;
- Portskewett Hill Roman Site SAMS.

Landscape Receptors Sensitivity

3.44 Landscape sensitivity is defined by a number of factors, and it does not necessarily follow that a highly valued landscape or landscape feature will always be defined by a high sensitivity. Landscape designation is thus only one of a number of criteria that are considered in identifying the relative 'sensitivity' of the landscape to a proposed development. It should not be used in isolation. We have assessed the overall sensitivity of the existing landscape resource based on the following representative criteria:

- Existing land use;
- Landscape scale and pattern;
- Landscape value and quality;
- Nature of views and degree of visual enclosure and openness;
- Landscape designations present; and
- Scope for mitigation.

3.45 The overall sensitivity of a landscape is categorised as high, medium, or low for the purposes of this assessment. *Table 6, below*, provides information relating to the various criteria affecting landscape sensitivity, so as to identify a final overall level of sensitivity for the local landscape to be ascribed.

Table 6: Sensitivity of the Development Site and Local Landscape to the Proposed Development

LANDSCAPE ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Land use	The western part of this extensive Site consists of a number of pasture fields as well as blocks of substantial woodland on the

	rising ground of Ballan Hill and Crown Hill. To the east, on flatter and more open land, is the rest of the Site, also predominantly under pasture. The extensive David Broome Equestrian Centre is to the west of the Site, comprised of a large-scale permanent infrastructure of hardstandings, events rings and supporting buildings. Just to the north of Site is the recently-installed Oak Grove solar farm. The north-western boundary of the Site extends as far as the M48 motorway and the north-eastern boundary extends to the A48 at Killcrow Hill.
Scale and pattern	The western part of the Site is to some extent more enclosed than the eastern part of the Site and set within a gently undulating valley landscape. Fields are irregular in shape and medium in size. Boundaries are mostly low well-maintained hedges, with a significant proportion of hedgerow trees. Woodland tree cover on the rising ground, as well as the hedgerows along the system of lanes, limits longer views. The eastern part of the Site is larger in scale and much more open with very few individual trees and limited hedgerow cover.
Value and Quality	While this landscape has some attractive features - such as the low wooded hills on the eastern edges of the valley - there are a number of urbanising elements: the settlement edges of Caldicot, the large-scale equestrian infrastructure of the David Broome Centre, the M48 corridor and the solar farm at Oak Grove. Traffic noise from the M48, A48 and the B4245 significantly reduces the sense of rural tranquillity.
Nature of views	Longer views in the vicinity of the western part of the Site are mostly limited by the degree of hedgerow vegetation and blocks of woodland and the gentle rolling topography. There are some longer views out, mostly from the higher ground of the eastern part of the Site towards the south and the Severn estuary. Caldicot Castle, built on a low rise near Nedern Brook, is an important heritage feature, but views to and from this structure are substantially limited by the degree of tree cover in its immediate setting.
Landscape Designations	There are no specific landscape designations on the Site.
Scope for mitigation	Primary mitigation would be working with the grain of the landscape and taking advantage of a number of attractive existing features, such as the wooded slopes of Ballan Hill and Castle Hill and the gentle undulating topography. There are important opportunities to set the development within a strong Green Infrastructure multi-functional framework which would provide benefits, not just for future Site users but also for the wider community, through enhanced access and biodiversity links.
Overall landscape sensitivity in relation to ability to accommodate development of the scale, nature and extent proposed	Medium: <i>Reasoning:</i> The eastern part of the Site is recognised in the Updated MCC Landscape Sensitivity Study as one of the most potentially developable areas in the vicinity of Portskewett and Caldicot.

	While the western part is rated as being of higher sensitivity to development, this judgement, in our opinion, does not take proper account of the topography, hedgerow and woodland tree cover which limit views out and would be of assistance in assimilating development of a substantial scale.
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Principal Visual Receptors

3.46 Various potential views within the study area have been identified from desktop research. These views were subsequently assessed in the field, photographically recorded, and included in *Appendix B Figures AJA/03 – AJA/11*, inclusive, as providing representative views of the proposed development in its landscape context. Listed below are brief descriptions of the main potential visual receptors:

- Residential receptors: The settlements of Portskewett and Caldicot, as well as individual properties which are likely to experience potential effects;
- Users of the PRoW system and Access Land including Caldicot Country Park;
- Visual aspects of the setting of Caldicot Castle Listed Building/SAMS/Conservation Area;
- Visual aspects of the setting of Mount Ballan Grade II Listed House and any other Listed Buildings which are likely to experience substantial visual effects;
- Promoted viewpoint of Eagles Nest in Wye Valley AONB;
- Users of the road network including the M48, A48, B4245 and Crick Road on the western boundary of the Site.

4. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The elements of the proposed development are described in detail elsewhere in these LDP Stage 2 representations. This large-scale mixed development would primarily consist of employment and residential uses – with a supporting Two Form Entry Primary School. Another element of the scheme is a proposed Local Authority Highways depot and co-working hub. All of this development would be set within a strong and well-integrated green infrastructure/landscape setting.

Mitigation

4.2 This assessment also takes account of the mitigation measures which have been considered and incorporated in the development proposals.

4.3 The primary mitigation has been a landscape/‘Green Infrastructure -led’ masterplan approach to the development. Landscape and GI opportunities and constraints have been considered from the outset of the project planning and from this analysis a strong landscape/GI framework has been established as a setting for the proposed new housing area and employment facilities. This framework is respectful of the existing pattern, scale, and grain of the existing landscape context.

4.4 Potential GI opportunities include:

- Linking a new SUDS scheme for the development to Offsite watercourses;

- Creation of a network of primary and secondary 'Greenways' to form part of the wider PROW network, with links to Caldicot Castle Country Park and the corridor of the disused former MoD railway line to the west;
- Pedestrian and cycle connection to ongoing active travel links, including connection to the proposed future Sustrans route along the former MoD railway corridor;
- Substantial on-site and off-site planting belts and on-site green spaces, which could also help link St Pierre with woodlands to the west and south-west as habitat connections;
- Additional landscape buffer to the existing solar farm;
- Potential to re-instate elements of the former historic parkland landscape character to the east of Mount Ballan House, including the slopes of Crown Hill;
- Incorporating Ballan Wood and Crown Hill, to provide opportunities for active woodland management for nature conservation as well as recreational access.
- Side valley between Ballan Wood and Crown provides an opportunity for flower-rich meadows as well as swales and wild play;
- A Community Orchard Scheme;
- Community Allotments.

- 4.5 Long term sustainable management will be provided for all the existing and proposed landscape features.

5. MAGNITUDE OF EFFECTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Elements of the Proposed Development which have the potential to cause landscape and/or visual effects

- 5.1 The following is a schedule of the main elements of the proposed development that have the potential to cause landscape and/or visual effects:
- Erection of Site compounds, temporary access and storage areas, security fencing etc;
 - Potential effects to the present landscape character of the Site and the surrounding area;
 - Potential effects to public visual receptors in the landscape and private views from properties.

Assessment of Effects on the Landscape Resource

- 5.2 Landscape effects are defined as changes in the elements, characteristics, and qualities of the landscape as a result of development. These effects can be positive, negative, or neutral. When identifying and assessing landscape change, it is important to take into account the existing trends for change within the landscape, which may be due to natural processes or human activities.
- 5.3 There will be effects on the landscape fabric of the Site during the construction phase as a result of ground disturbance, temporary Site works, machinery such as earthmovers, access tracks, etc. Disturbance will be short term and affected surfaces will be restored to grass.

Effects on Landscape Character

- 5.4 LANDMAP places the Site within the Visual and Sensory Aspect Area Leechpool MNMTHVS04. This Aspect Area is evaluated as being of 'Moderate' value. The *Overall Evaluation* notes that this is:

'A semi-rural landscape with pleasing undulating hills acting as an important setting to Caldicot Castle and as a backcloth to the levels. The area is in moderate condition with fairly consistent character although there are instances of locally intrusive development. Its sense of place is defined by Caldicot Castle, the dispersed linear settlement of Leechpool, and views of the estuary. Gently undulating arable and mixed farmland is relatively common in Monmouthshire'.

- 5.5 This Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas covers a substantial area to the north and east of Caldicot and Portskewett and which includes the entire area of the Site. This broad-brush study does not distinguish between the significant variations in landscape character between the eastern and western parts of the Site, where the former lies within an open plateau landscape and the latter in a valley setting with some sense of enclosure. Development in the more open eastern sector of the Site will be visible over a significant area. Development in the western sector, while less widely visible due to some enclosure of valley woodland, hedgerows, and topography, is at the same time set within a more attractive and visually sensitive landscape. However, offsetting these adverse effects of built development in the open countryside, to a significant extent, is the landscape/'GI-led' approach to the Site planning. This will considerably reduce the adverse effects and create attractive well-functioning places for a new community to develop and grow. Biodiversity gains and health and well-being benefits will be built into the development. Taking these different factors into account, the likely residual effects on the landscape character of the overall Aspect Area are assessed as being *minor adverse*.

Massing and Scale

- 5.6 As has been described above, there is a clear distinction between the landscape character and context of the eastern and western parts of the Site. While the eastern part is more open, and new development more visible, it is in the context of a larger scale of landscape which can potentially accommodate and assimilate a larger urban area. The western part of the Site, more visually attractive than the eastern, can nonetheless, in our opinion, accommodate significant development with less effects beyond the Site because of a degree of enclosure. Again, the landscape/'GI-led' approach to the Site planning will reduce adverse effects of the mass and scale on the Site and surrounding area. For these reasons the residual level of effect of mass and scale would be *moderate adverse* on the immediate surroundings of the Site.

Physical Landscape Effects on Topography

- 5.7 The construction of the development will generally involve only minor changes to levels, given the gently sloping topography. Furthermore, changes will be minimised not only for visual reasons but for economic reasons, to reduce cut-and-fill operations. As new planting becomes established and begins to mature, it will tend to further obscure any changes so that the appearance of new earthworks becomes softened. The residual effect of physical changes to

Site topography are therefore assessed as having a *minor adverse* magnitude of effect on topography.

Vegetation

- 5.8 As can be seen from the *Green Infrastructure Opportunities Plan* accompanying the submission, the great majority of Site vegetation features would be retained within the Proposed Development. When the development is complete, there would be a permanent well-established Green Infrastructure across the Site, incorporating extensive areas of native tree and shrub planting, species-rich meadows and wetland planting associated with a SUDS drainage strategy. These new vegetation features would be adding to a framework of retained trees and hedgerows and would much more than compensate for the vegetation losses which occurred during the construction phase. The residual magnitude of effect on the Site vegetation resource is therefore considered to be *medium beneficial*.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.9 The only existing rights of way across the Site are two in the north-eastern part around Killcrow Hill. One of these, on the lane leading to Oak Grove Farm, would be maintained. The other, slightly further east would be permanently relocated on an alignment to be agreed with the Council to maintain the connection between the A48 and B4245.
- 5.10 A series of public open space 'greenways' would run through the Site, providing valuable enhancements to public access. Mount Ballan Wood and Crown Hill Wood, included within the Site area, could also allow some degree of public accessibility. New footpath and cycleway connections could be made from the Site back to Portskewett and Caldicot. There will also be connections into the local countryside and, as the Green Infrastructure planting matures, the visual and perceptual qualities of these linkages will improve further. For these reasons, the residual magnitude of effect on the public rights of way network would be *moderate beneficial*.

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

- 5.11 The Site and its locality can, in our opinion, be regarded as of *medium* landscape sensitivity (see Table 6).

Overall Magnitude of Change

- 5.12 The proposed allocation would be for major development and would represent a major magnitude of change on the Site. However, the Landscape/ 'GI-led' approach to the masterplanning of the Site will ensure that maximum advantage is taken of the environmental opportunities of the Site and its wider context. The existing framework of woodland, trees, and hedgerows, coupled with extensive new structure planting, will enable the development to be well assimilated into the wider landscape surroundings. The magnitude of change on the surrounding landscape would therefore be overall *moderate adverse*.

Overall Magnitude and Significance of Landscape Effects

- 5.13 Given the *medium* sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *major* landscape magnitude of change on the Site, the predicted overall level of effect on the landscape of the Site is considered to be *major- moderate adverse*. However, the overall level of effect on the wider landscape beyond the Site would be *moderate-minor* when mitigation planting has become established.

Assessment of Visual effects of Proposed Development

General

- 5.14 Visual effects are defined as changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. This can be positive (beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e., adverse or a detraction). The assessment of visual effects describes:
- The changes in the character of the available views resulting from the development;
 - The changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptors.

Residential Receptors

- 5.15 Residential receptors are amongst the most sensitive to visual effects. In accordance with GLVIA 3rd Edition, the assessment of visual effects is based on the likely view(s) from ground floor rooms that are normally occupied during daylight hours and from ground-level curtilage.

Portskewett

- 5.16 The great majority of properties in this settlement will have no views of any part of the proposed development. It is likely that it is only in the northern part of Portskewett, adjacent to Crick Road, where some of the Site area may be visible. Even then, only a small part of the western Site area would be visible. At all stages of the development, the magnitude of effect is assessed as *minor adverse* with a *moderate-minor* level of effect on these high sensitivity receptors and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.17 If the consented residential development is built out in the triangle of fields between Crick Road, the B4245 and the derelict former MoD railway line, there will some limited visual connection with the proposed Site development. Effects will be similar to those described in paragraph 5.16 above, but at the northern end would locally rise to *moderate adverse* during construction and then reduce to *minor adverse* immediately after and when mitigation planting has become established.

Caldicot

- 5.18 The only part of this settlement where visual effects from the proposed development might be anticipated appears to be on the north-eastern edges overlooking the valley of the Nevern Brook. However, the extent of valley vegetation, including along the disused former MoD railway line, plus the shallow angle of view, would mean that visual effects will be limited. During construction, the magnitude of effect is assessed as *minor adverse*, reducing to *negligible adverse* immediately after completion and when mitigation planting has become established.

Leechpool

- 5.19 This small linear settlement, about 300m east of the Site, is spread out along a minor road leading south from the B4245. *Viewpoint VP5* illustrates a typical view from this settlement towards the Site. Much of the Site will not be visible but upper parts of some of the proposed development that would flank the B4245 will be visible. These views will be softened by roadside structure planting. During construction, the magnitude of effect is assessed as *minor adverse*, reducing to *negligible adverse* immediately after completion and when mitigation planting has become established.

Individual properties

- 5.20 The following assessment of visual effects are for a representative range of individual properties. This, however, should not be regarded as a definitive list of all individual properties which might be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.21 Farthing House lies below Farthing Wood and at the junction of Crick Road and the B4245. The house's principal orientation is westwards, looking over the David Broome Equestrian Centre, and there will be some glimpses of the southern part of the Site from mostly upper windows on the south elevation. During and immediately after construction, the magnitude of effect would be *moderate adverse* resulting in a *major-moderate* level of effect. The magnitude of effect would reduce to *minor adverse* when mitigation planting is established with a residual level of effect of *moderate-minor* and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.22 There are a number of properties located along the B4245 close to the Site boundaries and visual effects will vary depending on the angle of view, curtilage vegetation and juxtaposition with proposed Green Infrastructure accompanying the development. For the majority of these properties, the magnitude of effect would be *major adverse* during construction, reducing to *moderate adverse* immediately after and when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on these high sensitivity receptors would be *major moderate adverse* and therefore *significant*.
- 5.23 Mount Ballan is approximately 300m north of the junction of Crick Road and the B4245. (There are several other detached properties nearby which all appear to be part of the equestrian centre complex.) Due to the degree of tree cover around these properties, the visual effects of development would be anticipated to be *moderate adverse* during and immediately after construction, reducing to *minor adverse* when mitigation planting has become established. This would result in a residual level of effect of *moderate- minor adverse and therefore not significant*.
- 5.24 Other individual properties along the section of Crick Road on the western Site boundary are likely to experience a similar level of effect as described in paragraph 5.23, above.
- 5.25 Croft Farm is located just beyond the northern extremities of the Site at Killcrow Hill. There would be provision for separation planting from the development, but the magnitude of effect would be *major adverse* during construction, reducing to *moderate adverse* immediately after and when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on this high sensitivity receptor would be *major- moderate adverse* and therefore *significant*.

- 5.26 Oak Grove Farm is a little further south and west of Croft Farm but also adjoins the Site. The landscape context of the farm has already substantially changed with the construction of the solar farm. The proposed development will further change the setting and aspect of the farmhouse. The magnitude of effect would be *major adverse* during construction, reducing to *moderate adverse* immediately after and when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on this high sensitivity receptor would be *major moderate adverse* and therefore *significant*.

Rights of Way and Designated Access Land

- 5.27 As previously noted, there are only two public rights of way across this large-scale Site, both in the vicinity of Killcrow Hill. The footpath leading to Oak Grove Farm would be maintained but, rather than ending at the farm, would be connected to the new network of paths being proposed within the development. While there will be major changes to the setting of the existing path resulting from the built development of the Site, this will become part of an attractive system of 'greenways' and in the process, a more meaningful route for public use than the present. The magnitude of effect on users would be *major adverse* during construction, reducing to *minor adverse* immediately after and minor beneficial when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on footpath users who, in LVIA terms are medium sensitivity receptors, would be *minor beneficial* and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.28 The other existing right of way on Site is located a little further east. The essential connection which it makes between the A48 and the B4245 would be maintained, but there would need to be a permanent diversion to accommodate the proposed new development. However, like the other right of way described above in paragraph 5.27, above, this diverted route would be part of a wider network of well-landscaped 'greenways'.
- 5.29 A public right of way connects Leechpool with the B4245 and there will be views of the development from sections of this path. The magnitude of effect would be *major adverse* during construction, reducing to *moderate adverse* immediately after and when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on footpath users assessed as medium sensitivity receptors would be *moderate-minor adverse* and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.30 There are a number of public rights of way in the valley. Most of those in the valley bottom are unlikely to have views because of the density of vegetation along the derelict former MoD railway line and on hedge lines. There will, however, be views of the western part of the Site as these footpaths approach Crick Road. The magnitude of effect on these short lengths of path would be *major adverse* during construction, reducing to *moderate adverse* immediately after and when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on footpath users assessed as medium sensitivity receptors would be *moderate-minor adverse* for these sections of path and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.31 Several footpaths on the north-eastern edges of Portskewett are located on more elevated land where there may be some glimpses of the northern end of the Site. During and

immediately after construction, the magnitude of effect of development is assessed as *minor adverse* with a *moderate-minor* significance of effect. When mitigation planting is established the magnitude of effect would reduce to *negligible adverse* and therefore of *not* significant.

- 5.32 There are long range views from a public footpath just below the designated access land at Gray Hill, approximately 5.5kms to the north-west (*see Appendix B Viewpoint VP8*). At this distance in this panoramic view, only a small part of the site is just discernible on the higher ground close to the junction of Crick Road and the B4245 within the surrounding vegetation. The proposed development will have *negligible adverse* magnitude of effect at all stages of the development.

Roads

- 5.33 The B4245 road, linking Portskewett and Caldicot with the A48 to the north, passes the eastern boundary of the Site. Some of the access to the development would be off this road. Views obtainable from the road to the Site are very open with little or no intervening vegetation. The backdrop of woodland around Oak Grove Farm does provide a degree of assistance in visually assimilating the proposed development. The magnitude of effect would be *major adverse* during and immediately after construction, reducing to *moderate adverse* when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on road users assessed as low sensitivity receptors would be *minor adverse* and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.34 The magnitude of effect for uses of the A48 would be similar to that for users of the B4245.
- 5.35 Crick Road follows the western Site boundary. This is a minor road with a degree of hedgerow vegetation. Ballan Wood and Crown Hill Wood provide an important backdrop to views across the Site and would give some sense of enclosure to the development. The masterplan approach includes for a 'greenway' along the entire length of this boundary. The magnitude of effect would be *major adverse* during and immediately after construction, reducing to *moderate adverse* when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on road users assessed as low sensitivity receptors would be *minor adverse* and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.36 There a brief view from the M48 of the north-western part of the Site, considerably filtered by intervening vegetation on the motorway embankment. The magnitude of effect would be *minor adverse* during and immediately after construction, reducing to *minor adverse* when mitigation planting has become established. The residual level of effect on motorway users, assessed as medium sensitivity receptors, would be *minor adverse* and therefore *not significant*.
- 5.37 While there are various other public roads near the Site, users of these are unlikely to experience any significant effects from the development.

Heritage Assets

- 5.38 This is not an exhaustive list of designated and non-designated heritage Sites in the study area for this LVIA. However, we have identified what are likely to be the main assets which could

potentially experience significant effects. For full details of effects on Heritage and Archaeological Designations, the primary supporting documents are the *Heritage and Archaeological reports accompanying this planning representation*.

Visual Setting of Caldicot Castle/Listed Building/SAMS/Conservation Area

- 5.39 The immediate setting of this Grade I Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument and Conservation Area Site has heavy tree cover. This fact, coupled with a separation distance of some 500m to the closest part of the Site, results in only a very limited visual connection with the Site. It is therefore anticipated that there will be no more than a *negligible adverse* magnitude of change on the visual setting of this heritage asset at any stage of the development.

Visual Setting of Other Listed Buildings/ SAMS and Registered Historic Landscape

- 5.40 Mount Ballan House Grade II Listed is the only Listed Building which has been identified in this LVIA as experiencing substantial effects from the development, and an assessment of visual effects on its setting would be similar to that described in paragraph 5.23, above.
- 5.41 The Berries Mound & Bailey Castle is an earthworks SAMS located between the Nedern Brook and the derelict former MoD railway line to the west of the Site. Given the degree of vegetation cover along the railway line and Crick Road, there will be very little visual connection between the SAMS and the Site. Consequently, it is not anticipated that there will be more than a *negligible adverse* magnitude of change at any stage of the development.
- 5.42 We have not identified any visual effects on the setting of the Gwent Levels Registered Historic Landscape, due to intervening topography, vegetation and the separation distance.

Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

- 5.43 The southern boundary of the Wye Valley AONB, in the vicinity of St Pierre's Great Woods, lies approximately 1.2kms from the north eastern extremities of the Site. However, with topography and intervening vegetation, as well as the separation distances, there will be little view of the proposed development. It is therefore anticipated that there will be no more than a *negligible adverse* magnitude of change on viewpoints in this part of the Wye Valley AONB at any stage of the development.
- 5.44 *Viewpoint VP9* is from the Eagles Nest, one of the most best-known panoramic views over the lower Wye Valley and across the Severn estuary. In this relatively well wooded view, the eastern parts of the Site, located on open ground, are just discernible. However, at a distance of approximately 7.5kms, they are a very small element in this panoramic view. The proposed development will have *negligible adverse* magnitude of effect at all stages of the development.

6. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 6.1 Whilst the 2013 edition of the GLVIA provides more guidance on cumulative landscape and visual effects, the definition contained in the 2002 is still relevant. Those guidelines defined cumulative landscape and visual effects as those that:
'Result from additional changes to the landscape or visual amenity caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other development (associated with or separate to it), or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future'.¹
- 6.2 Best practice Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment guidance contained in the 3rd Edition GLVIA, Page 133, states that the baseline for assessing cumulative and visual effects should include those schemes and additional potential schemes that are not yet present in the landscape but are at various stages in the development and consenting process, including schemes with planning consent and schemes that are the subject of a valid planning application that has yet to be determined. Schemes that are at a pre-planning or scoping stage are not generally considered in the assessment of cumulative effects.
- 6.3 Using these guidelines, we have not identified any schemes in the vicinity which are relevant to the consideration of cumulative visual effects with the proposed development.

7. POLICY CONTEXT

- 7.1 This section highlights the aspects of planning policy which are relevant to the landscape appraisal of the proposed development. There are also short commentaries on how the development relates to the specific policies.

National Landscape Planning Related Policy

Future Wales: The National Plan 2040

- 7.2 This high-level strategic document, published in 2021, is Wales's *national development framework, setting the direction for development in Wales to 2040. It is a development plan with a strategy for addressing key national priorities through the planning system.* The principle of placemaking is embedded in this document. With this in mind, *Policy 9 – Resilient Ecological Networks and Green Infrastructure* states, for example:

'..... identify opportunities where existing and potential green infrastructure could be maximised as part of placemaking, requiring the use of nature-based solutions as a key mechanism for securing sustainable growth, ecological connectivity, social equality and well-being'.

AJA commentary

- 7.3 A landscape and GI approach has led the masterplan strategy for the development, to ensure that the unique characteristics of the local environment are taken fully into account and used as important building blocks in creating the sense of place for the development. This respect for the integrity and essential qualities of the Site is key to creating a strong and

¹ GLVIA Second Edition 2002, Para. 7.12

appropriate sense of place for the development, as well as attractive and multi-functional external spaces. This development would make a major contribution to the Green Infrastructure network in the northern Caldicot/ Portskewett area.

Planning Policy Wales, Edition 11, February 2021 (PPW11)

- 7.4 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) sets out the land use planning policies of the Welsh Government. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW provide the national planning policy framework for Wales. PPW, the TANs¹, MTANs and policy clarification letters comprise national planning policy.² PPW11, published in February 2021, clearly sets out early in the document how the wording is to be interpreted, by way of this paragraph:

‘PPW should be read as a whole, as aspects of policy and their application to a particular development proposal could occur in several parts of the document. Where ‘must’ is used in the document it reflects a legislative requirement or indicates where action is needed now to make changes in practice over the long term to achieve strategic outcomes. Where ‘should’ is used it reflects Welsh Government expectations of an efficient and effective planning system.’³

- 7.5 PPW11 advises that all landscapes of Wales are valued for their intrinsic contribution to a sense of place. The document states that:

‘Considering landscape at the outset of formulating strategies and policies in development plans and when proposing development is key to sustaining and enhancing their special qualities and delivering the maximum well-being benefits for present and future generations as well as helping to deliver an effective and integrated approach to natural resource management over the long term.’⁴

AJA commentary

- 7.6 The commissioning of this LVIA is entirely consistent with the above national planning policy approach to the full consideration of the proposed development in its landscape context. The particular qualities of the present Site have been analysed and a design developed which responds sensitively and contributes positively to the sense of place.

TAN12: Design

- 7.7 Technical Advice Notes (TANs) are to be read in conjunction with PPW, which sets out the Welsh Government’s land use planning policy in respect of promoting sustainability.

- 7.8 Within Planning Policy Wales TAN12 Design, Paragraph 5.5.2⁵ advises that:

² PPW11, paragraph 1.1

³ *Ibid*, para 1.9

⁴ *Ibid*, para 6.3.3

⁵ TAN12 Design; March 2016

'In general terms, good design will almost always be dependent on working within the natural constraints and the historic character of the landscape and this should be the starting point from which the design of development evolves. The aim should be to achieve good design solutions which maximise the natural landscape assets and minimise environmental impact on the landscape. It is particularly important that proposals to amend or create new landscape are not considered as an afterthought and that the long-term impact of development on the landscape is fully understood. The quality of implementation and the long-term management of changes implicit in planting schemes are fundamental to a scheme's success.'

AJA commentary:

The development has been Green Infrastructure and landscape 'led' and designed to respect and reinforce local character. The context of the Site has been considered carefully and a design strategy prepared where existing landscape features are retained and protected and managed, along with substantial new planting, to integrate the new development into its surroundings. This planting will also benefit the ecological diversity and value of the Site

Current Monmouthshire Development Plan Policies

- 7.9 The development plan for the purposes of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 is the Monmouthshire County Council Local Development Plan (LDP), which was adopted in February 2014. We have evaluated the proposed development against these policies in the absence of new draft policies being published for the RLDP.

Policy LC5 – Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character

This 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.*

Particular emphasis will be given to those landscapes identified through the LANDMAP Landscape Character Assessment as being of high and outstanding quality because of a certain landscape quality or combination of qualities.'

AJA commentary

- 7.10 Careful desktop and fieldwork analysis have been carried out of the landscape and Green Infrastructure assets and opportunities of the Site and its surrounding context. The masterplan and associated Green Infrastructure strategy have been informed by this analysis and the development would be comfortably assimilated into the local landscape. A wide range of GI opportunities are incorporated within the development and the development would have no unacceptable landscape or visual effects when mitigation planting is established.

Policy GI1 – Green Infrastructure

This 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. Where on-Site provision of green infrastructure is not possible, contributions will be sought to make appropriate provision for green infrastructure off-Site”.*

AJA commentary

- 7.11 The development proposals have been informed and led by an integrated GI/landscape approach which seeks to achieve the best multi-functional use of the land resource. The GI and landscape context has been analysed so that the development can be not only assimilated into its surroundings, but also contribute to the local landscape character and enhance the wider Green Infrastructure network.

DES1 – General Design Considerations

“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. 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, considering 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;*
- i) make the most efficient use of land compatible with the above criteria, including that the minimum net density of residential development should be 30 dwellings per hectare, subject to criterion l) below;*
- 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;*
- l) ensure that existing residential areas characterised by high standards of privacy and spaciousness are protected from overdevelopment and insensitive or inappropriate infilling.*

AJA commentary

- 7.12 The design development approach, as envisaged, has taken account of the particular landscape characteristics of the Site and its wider setting. The proposed mixed-use employment and residential development would be in scale with this part of the landscape around Portskewett. An indicative masterplan layout has been prepared within a strong and well-integrated landscape and Green Infrastructure. Together, this would strongly contribute to a 'sense of place' and allow for an effective and positive assimilation of the development into this part of the settlement and wider surroundings.

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- 7.13 Although the Site lies outside the settlement boundary, it is shown within one of the proposed broad-brush Strategic Growth Options Areas in the Integrated Sustainability Appraisal (ISA) for the Monmouthshire Replacement Local Development Plan February 2020.
- 7.14 The most relevant policy to landscape, visual and green infrastructure issues is

Draft Strategic Policy S18 – Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Nature Conservation

'Green Infrastructure assets and opportunities should embrace the placemaking approach and be designed and managed to deliver a multifunctional resource; capable of delivering a wide range of social, economic, environmental and health and well-being benefits for local communities and the county as a whole, including climate change action and mitigation. Development proposals must: Maintain, protect and enhance the integrity and connectivity of Monmouthshire's green infrastructure, including landscape, biodiversity, public rights of ways and heritage assets through the following key functions:

- (i) Landscape Setting and Quality of Place, by identifying, protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing the distinctive landscape, historical, cultural, ecological and geological heritage, including natural and man-made elements associated with existing landscape character;*

- ii) Biodiversity and Resilient Ecosystems by protecting, positively managing and enhancing biodiversity and geological interests, including designated and non-designated Sites, and habitats and species of importance and the ecological connectivity between them;*
- (iii) Greenspace Provision, Connectivity and Enjoyment by ensuring the creation of accessible multifunctional interconnected spaces that offer opportunities for recreation and health and well-being;*
- (iv) Sustainable Energy Use;*
- (v) Local Food Production; and*
- (vi) Flood Attenuation and Water Resource Management’.*

AJA commentary

- 7.15 The development proposals have been informed and led by an integrated GI/landscape approach which seeks to achieve the best multi-functional use of the land resource. Analysis has been carried out of the existing GI and landscape assets and these have been incorporated into the indicative masterplan proposals. This approach will mean that the development can be not only assimilated into its surroundings, but also contribute to the local landscape character and enhance the wider green infrastructure network.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been carried out of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development at Bradbury Farm, Portskewett. This study has been carried out in accordance with nationally agreed 'best practice' standards of landscape and visual assessment. It has involved an examination of various data about the Site, including maps, aerial photographs, and planning background information. A detailed inspection has been made of the Site, looking at its present condition and at the potential development effects.
- 8.2 Landscape and visual effects have been assessed, taking into account the construction stage, immediately after construction and when mitigation planting becomes established. The evaluation does take account of the full range of mitigation measures which are proposed.
- 8.3 The Site is located within two main areas of landscape character, on the eastern valley floor and sides of the shallow valley of the Nevern Brook, and on open plateau land to the east.
- 8.4 The site is largely unconnected from existing settlement although at its southern end, will come close to consented but yet unbuilt development at Crick Road Portskewett.
- 8.5 The large-scale infrastructure of the David Broome Equestrian Centre is an influencing factor located close to the south west of the Site.
- 8.6 Ballan Wood and Crown Hill Wood are important local landmarks and provide a backdrop and some enclosure, particularly for the western part of the Site.

- 8.7 Other settlement in the Site vicinity is mostly limited to small linear villages, such as Leechpool and Ifton Hill.
- 8.8 The Site reflects the gently rolling topography of the Nevern Brook valley floor, then rising up to the generally level plateau to the east of Ballan Wood and Crown Hill. Sloping sections of the Site are comparatively gentle, so that only localised changes in levels would be required to accommodate the proposed development.
- 8.9 The illustrative masterplan has been led by an overarching Green Infrastructure strategy which will assimilate the new housing and employment uses into the natural environment, while creating attractive and well-functioning external spaces for residents and other Site users.
- 8.10 There will only be limited and localised visual effects on existing residential areas in the settlements of Portskewett and Caldicot. There will be however, be significant visual effects for residents of a number of individual properties close to the boundaries of the Site.
- 8.11 Mount Ballan, a Grade II Listed Building, is one of these properties, but due to the degree of tree cover around its curtilage, no residual significant visual effects on its setting are anticipated.
- 8.12 Likewise, no residual significant visual effects on the setting are anticipated on Caldicot Castle/Listed Building/SAMS/Conservation Area.
- 8.13 There will be significant visual effects on some users of the road network, although these will reduce as the structure planting for the development becomes established.
- 8.14 There will significant residual effects on a small part of the existing local public right of way footpath network but, overall, there will be substantial gains arising from the implementation of a wide-ranging network of new footpaths and cycleways envisaged in the indicative masterplan.
- 8.15 The overall conclusion is that, although the proposal is for major development in the countryside, this can, with a robust, green infrastructure and landscape 'led' approach, taking advantage of the benefits of existing landform and vegetation, be acceptably assimilated into the landscape of the general Portskewett/Caldicot area.

Appendix A: LANDMAP Aspect Layers other than Visual and Sensory

1. Baseline Conditions

1.1 The Cultural landscape Services layer is replacing the Cultural Landscape Layer and NRW have moved away from evaluations for this replacement layer, using the Visual and Sensory Aspect areas and reports information in that context. LANDMAP places the Site within the Cultural Landscape Services Area identified as **Leechpool MNMTHCL049**.

1.2 LANDMAP places the Site within Historic Landscape Aspect Area **St Pierre Pill MNMTHHL006**. This Aspect Area is classified *Rural environment/Agricultural/Regular Fieldscapes (Level 3)*. The summary description is as follows:

'The boundaries of the Aspect Area are the line of the Roman road from Newnham to Caerleon, which divides it from Wentwood and the Tintern monastic landscape to the N; Modern Chepstow to the W; the intersection of the hard geology with the alluvium of the Caldicot and Mathern Levels to the S and Modern Caldicot to the W. Historical Overview The earliest evidence of occupation is represented by a small group of artefacts including three handaxes forming part of an earlier Palaeolithic distribution of stray finds along the South Wales littoral (Aldhouse-Green, 2000, 11) recovered from the gravels at Sudbrook. The Neolithic is represented by the chambered tomb of Heston Brake, one of a series of such monuments situated on the undulating hinterland overlooking the Severn Estuary / Bristol Channel and forming part of a SE Wales coastal group (Peterson & Pollard, 2004, 72). Although somewhat disturbed, the structure can be seen to consist of a linear chamber and passage set within a long cairn aligned E-W. Excavations carried out in 1888 revealed 'two chambers lying E and W and connected internally', together with fragments of human and cattle bone (Bagnall-Oakley, 1889, 18-20). Isolated Bronze Age artefacts have also been found in the area together with a round barrow at Killcrow Hill; however, the most visible prehistoric Sites date from the Iron Age, a period which is believed to have witnessed a shift in population from the uplands to the coast, perhaps in response to deteriorating climate and soils (Howell & Pollard, 2004, 146). The multivallate promontory fort at Sudbrook occupies a strategic location with respect to the Severn Estuary and is thought to have been the tribal capital of the Silures. The ramparts enclose a roughly triangular area of 1.4 ha, but this was probably larger at the time of construction, as the promontory has suffered considerable erosion by the sea. The Camp was excavated in the 1930s (Nash-Williams, 1939)'.

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* states that:

"The Aspect Area contains monuments of Neolithic and Iron Age date and has revealed evidence Iron Age / Roman activity, especially in the vicinity of Portskewett / Sudbrook. The area is noted for a number of post-medieval landscape parks and gardens included within the Cadw Register of Parks and Gardens in Wales".

1.3 LANDMAP places the eastern part – and majority- of the Site within Geological Aspect Area **Leechpool MNMTHGL085**. This Aspect Area is classified *Lowland hills and valleys/Undulating*

lowland hill terrain/Undulating lowland hill terrain (Level 3). The entry for geographical and topographical character of the area contains the following description:

'Low massifs dominated by Carboniferous limestones with some Triassic cover towards the S. Includes a low escarpment in the W, NW and E and rises above surrounding platform area with river terrace deposits.

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'Moderate' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* notes as follows:

'Few notable Sites/landforms recorded and geology widespread in district'.

- 1.4 LANDMAP places the western part of the Site in the Geological Landscape Aspect Area **Caerwent-Sudbrook MNMTHGL084**. This Aspect Area is classified *Lowland hills and valleys/Lowland River and drainage systems/Ancient lowland river flood plain system (Level 3)*. The entry for geographical and topographical character of the area contains the following description:

"Complex of river terrace deposits and related platforms and other valley deposits. Forms a platform like surface marginal to the Carboniferous limestone-dominated massifs of the Caerwent-Portskewett-St Pierre area typical at 10-15 m above sea-level but up to 20 m locally. Includes surviving patches of 2nd Terrace deposits (Quaternary: Pleistocene) and overlies Triassic sandstones in the S and mudrocks elsewhere. Includes the Sudbrook promontory".

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* notes as follows:

"Area includes several Geodiversity Audit Sites including a stratigraphical type locality in addition to an exceptional range of river terrace features".

- 1.5 LANDMAP places the Site within the Landscape Habitats Aspect **S. rural Monmouthshire MNMTHLH105**. This Aspect Area is classified *Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/Grassland & Marsh/Improved Grassland (Level 3)*. It is described as:

"An extensive area of predominately farmland with improved grassland dominating but also a significant arable element".

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'Moderate' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* states that:

"The area is generally quite low ecological value improved grassland but there are small pockets of more valuable habitat. the deciding factor in increasing the evaluation to moderate is the large number of key species records."

2. Potential Effects of Proposed Development

- 2.1 LANDMAP places the Site within the Cultural Landscape Aspect Area the Cultural landscape Services layer is replacing the Cultural Landscape Layer and NRW have moved away from evaluations for this replacement layer, using the Visual and sensory aspect areas and reports information in that context. LANDMAP places the Site within the Cultural Landscape Services Area identified as **Leechpool MNMTHCL049**, but with no evaluation given now by LANDMAP, no attempt is made in the assessment to evaluate the effect of the proposed development in relation to this Aspect Area.
- 2.2 LANDMAP places the Site within Historic Landscape Aspect Area **St Pierre Pill MNMTHHL006**. The large-scale extent of the development will alter the present agricultural characteristics of a significant part of this Aspect Area. However, in terms of specific heritage features, there appear to be few potential effects. The visual setting of the SAMS and Listed Building of Caldicot Castle is heavily treed and this, combined with separation distance, results in almost no visual connection with the Site. Mount Ballan House, Listed Grade 2 is close to the Site's western boundary but the degree of roadside hedgerow and tree cover within the curtilage of the property means that visual connection with the Site is limited. Also, the indicative masterplan proposes an area of open green space running north eastwards across the Site from close to Mount Ballan – this space will benefit the visual setting of the Listed Building. Another heritage feature, the SAMS, The Berries Mound & Bailey Castle is just to the west of the former MoD railway corridor and relatively close to the north western sector of the Site. However, vegetation along the former railway line and along Crick Road provides some visual separation. A *negligible adverse* magnitude of effect is anticipated from the development on the overall Historic Aspect Area.
- 2.3 LANDMAP places the eastern part of the Site within Geological Aspect Area **Leechpool MNMTHGL085**. LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'Moderate' value. Although the Site covers a substantial area, the land is comparatively level and will require only minor cut and fill for the development. Therefore, a *negligible adverse* magnitude of effect is anticipated on this Geological Aspect Area.
- 2.4 LANDMAP places the western part of the Site in the Geological Landscape Aspect Area **Caerwent-Sudbrook MNMTHGL084**. LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value, but no specific geological features have been identified. Also, level changes across the Site are comparatively gentle and will require only minor cut-and-fill for the development. Therefore, a *negligible adverse* magnitude of effect is anticipated on this Geological Aspect Area.
- 2.5 LANDMAP places the Site within the Landscape Habitats Aspect **S. rural Monmouthshire MNMTHLH105**. LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'moderate' value. The agriculturally improved grazing fields comprising the Site are of limited ecological value. The hedgerows do have some value, but many of these are to be retained in the housing layout and reinforced with additional planting. An overarching Green Infrastructure strategy has

been development for the Site which will assimilate the new housing and employment uses into the natural environment, while creating attractive and well-functioning external spaces for residents and other Site users.

- 2.6 The GI strategy identifies opportunities of building on the existing Site and wider context GI assets to create multi-functional green spaces linked to the wider GI network in the Caldicot/Crick area. There will be major new planting areas and future management will be geared to maximise potential biodiversity benefits. While there will be a loss of open agricultural land, the GI masterplan approach to the development will result in an overall *minor beneficial* effect on this Landscape Habitats Aspect Area.