



**Mynydd Llanhilleth
Wind Farm**

FINAL DRAFT

**Appendix 6B
Landscape and
Visual Impact
Assessment
Baseline**

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Dimension
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On behalf of:
Pennant Walters

August 2024
Report Reference
edp6367_r009f

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	Report Ref: edp6367_r009			
	Author	Formatted	Peer Review	Proofed by/Date
009_DRAFT	MDu	CLa	CMY	-
009a	MDu	-	-	MWI 161122
009b	MDu	-	-	MWI 211122
009c	MDu	-	-	CLa 300623
009d	MDu	-	-	CRo 050723
009e_FINAL DRAFT	MDu	-	-	FMi 160824
009f_FINAL DRAFT	MDu	-	-	GGi 300824

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Section 1

Introduction, Purpose and Methodology

Introduction

- 1.1 The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) has been commissioned by Pennant Walters ('the applicant') to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) for a proposed windfarm development at Mynydd Llanhilleth (hereafter referred to as 'the Proposed Development') which is to be the subject of a Development of National Significance (DNS) application. This Baseline Report sets out the technical information pertinent to **Chapter 6** of the Environmental Statement (ES).
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cardiff, Cirencester, and Cheltenham. The practice provides advice to private and public sector clients throughout the UK in the fields of landscape, ecology, archaeology, cultural heritage, arboriculture, rights of way and masterplanning. Details of the practice can be obtained at our website (www.edp-uk.co.uk). EDP is a Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute¹ specialising in the assessment of the effects of Proposed Development on the landscape.
- 1.3 The Proposed Development comprises the construction and operation of up to seven wind turbines and associated ancillary infrastructure. The scheme was previously assessed with up to eight turbines, but Turbine 5 was removed following final submission and the application was withdrawn. The baseline reporting and assessment to follow reflects this. Each turbine proposed has a maximum height to blade tip of up to 180m and a hub height of up to 122m. The specification is for three-bladed rotors with a diameter of up to 150m. The determined life span of the wind farm considered is 30 years. **Annex EDP 1.0** includes the final layout plan, and a detailed description of the Proposed Development is provided within **Chapter 4** of the ES.
- 1.4 The Site is located within the upper valleys of South Wales, with the Ebbw Valleys to the West and Afon Lwyd Valley to the east. **Figure 6.1** illustrates the site boundary and the study areas pertaining to this Baseline Report. The regional site context is illustrated on **Figure 6.2** which includes the prevailing topography, and national landscape designations within the study area, namely the Bannau Brycheiniog/Brecon Beacons National Park (BBNP) and the Wye Valley National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty).
- 1.5 The Site straddles two local authority boundaries; the majority of the Site is within Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC) whilst part of the Site to the west lies within Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCB). At the local level, the Site occupies part of Mynydd Llanhilleth Common which is an exposed plateau over 400m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), and the Site contains public rights of way (PRoW) and minor roads. Blaen-y-Cwm Road is located within the western extent of the Site and this road

¹ LI Practice Number 1010

connects some of the closest settlements of St. Illtyds to the north-west and Pantygasseg to the south of the Site. Another minor road runs roughly east-west through the northern part of the Site and connects St. Illtyds to Talywain and Abersychan.

Purpose and Structure of this Baseline Report

- 1.6 The purpose of this LVIA baseline is to identify the landscape and visual baseline conditions of the Site and defined study areas, to inform the design and layout of the proposals and to establish an appropriate scope of work to facilitate an assessment of the effects predicted to arise from the Proposed Development, as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.
- 1.7 This stage comprised of a study of two separate but inter-linked issues:
- Landscape character is the physical make up and condition of the landscape itself, and arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects; and
 - Visual amenity is the way in which the site is seen (views to and from the site, their direction, character and sensitivity to change).
- 1.8 This LVIA baseline therefore identifies the landscape and visual receptors within the study area, and the following tasks have been undertaken to inform the baseline investigations:
- Identified relevant planning policy and legislation relating to the Proposed Development (**Section 2**);
 - Undertaken a data trawl exercise (**Section 3**) which included desktop studies and web search of relevant background documents and maps. EDP's study included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, Local Planning Authority (LPA) publications and landscape character assessments. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as National Parks, National Landscapes, Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) and Visually Important Local Landscapes (VILLS), Conservation Areas and Cadw's Register of Parks and Gardens with Special Historic Interest;
 - Identified the existing (baseline) condition (**Section 4**) and character of the Site and its context; and
 - Identified the existing visual (baseline) context for daytime (**Section 5**) and night-time (**Section 6**) with respect to the likely extent of visibility of the Proposed Development. Within the visual baseline, receptor groups are identified and a representative set of key views to and from the site are identified.

- 1.9 **Chapter 6** of the ES subsequently provides an assessment of the landscape and visual effects predicted to arise from development on the Site with reference to this baseline analysis.

Methodology Adopted for the Assessment

- 1.10 The Baseline Report has been undertaken in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)' (GLVIA3). The criteria referred to, but not defined within the guidelines, has been defined by EDP as set out in **Appendix 6A** of the ES, with terms clearly defined within the Glossary at **Annex EDP 3.0**.
- 1.11 **Familiarisation:** EDP's study has included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, LPA publications and LCA. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as National Landscapes, WHSs, CA and gardens and parks listed on Cadw's 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales' (RPG).
- 1.12 **Field Assessment:** EDP has undertaken field assessments of local site circumstances, including a photographic survey of the character and fabric of the Site and its surroundings, using photography from a number of representative viewpoints. Numerous field assessments were undertaken by a qualified landscape architects between March 2021 and May 2022.
- 1.13 **Consultation:** EDP has consulted on the scope and method of assessment proposed. Mynydd Llanhilleth EIA scoping report was submitted to the Planning Inspectorate under Regulation 33 of the 2017 Regulations (Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Wales) Regulations 2017) in May 2021. The opinions of statutory consultees such as the host LPAs, Neighbouring LPAs, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority (BBNPA) was sought through this formal consultation processes. An EIA scoping direction (Document reference 3273368: Mynydd Llanhilleth Wind Farm) was received in August 2021 which confirmed that Mynydd Llanhilleth Wind Farm qualifies as a DNS for which development consent is required under the 2017 Regulations.
- 1.14 Feedback received via the Scoping Direction has been incorporated within with respect to the extent of the LANDMAP method of assessment, and additional views requested by BBNPA, Torfaen LPA and Caerphilly LPA. The scope of the night-time assessment, CLVIA and Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA) were also consulted on and consultees were in general agreement with the scope proposed.
- 1.15 Further pre-application consultation was undertaken, and a Draft Environmental Statement (ES) was issued for consultation in December 2022.

- 1.16 The Scoping Direction and the pre-application consultation responses for the withdrawn application are expanded on in **Chapter 6** of the ES (at Section 6.3), as these remain relevant.

Study Area

- 1.17 To establish the baseline and potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at a range of geographical scales:
- In accordance with NatureScot, a zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) was initially modelled for a study area of 45km from the proposed turbine locations;
 - Through the consultation process, a broad 'study area' of 26km was agreed as shown on **Figure 6.1** Site Boundary and Study Areas, which allowed the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined. The search focussed on the local planning policy context, on identifying national and local landscape and other associated designations (e.g. National Parks and National Landscapes), and providing a general geographical understanding of the Site and its broader context (for example, in relation to landform, transport routes and the distribution and nature of settlement); and
 - Lastly, following a more detailed review of guidance notes, analysis and the scoping direction, a tiered study area approach has been set out to assess landscape character and visual amenity. The breakdown of the tiered approach, in accordance with guidance is set out in **Table EDP 1.1**.

Table EDP 1.1: Study Areas

Element	Study Area
1. International/National Landscape Designations with very high sensitivity: Blaenavon Industrial Landscape WHS, BBNP, Wye Valley National Landscape and Promoted Routes.	26km
2. Visual receptors with very high sensitivity (publicly accessible locations from these designations).	
3. Visual Receptors - with high to low sensitivity: minor roads, PROW, country parks, etc.	15km
4. LANDMAP Aspect Areas: Cultural, Landscape Habitats and Geological.	Within the site boundary.
5. LANDMAP Aspect Areas: Visual and Sensory and Historic Landscape, within the ZTV with 'outstanding' or 'high' evaluations overall.	26km
6. Visual and Sensory aspect areas (VSAA) within the ZTV with a 'moderate' overall evaluation whereby the scenic quality and/or character criteria are 'outstanding' or 'high'.	

Element	Study Area
<p>7. RVAA</p> <p>Includes wireframes and photomontages from settlements within 2km of the nearest turbine, and a description of outlying properties within the study area.</p>	2km of the nearest turbine.
<p>8. Night-time Assessment</p> <p>Includes three night photomontages within 5km and an additional view as requested by consultees from the Bloreng (BBNP), which is over 9km distance from the nearest turbine.</p>	5km focussed study area with occasional reference to more distant viewpoints.
<p>9. Cumulative LVIA</p> <p>Includes consented, operational and sites in planning.</p> <p>Includes single turbines of 45m+ to tip height where they are within 3km of the site boundary.</p> <p>Includes single turbines which are 50m high or taller beyond 5km.</p>	Slightly larger than 26km.

Scope of this Report

- 1.18 This report sets out the findings of the Landscape and Visual Baseline appraisal of the proposals, with the assessment of effects provided in detail at **Appendices 6B to 6M** and summarised within the ES **Chapter 6**.
- 1.19 This baseline report forms part of the following constituent parts of the full LVIA, which is set out in the following documents:
- **Appendix 6A:** LVIA Methodology;
 - **Appendix 6B:** LVIA Baseline (this document);
 - **Appendix 6C:** LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas Assessment of Effects;
 - **Appendix 6D:** LANDMAP Historic Landscape Aspect Areas Assessment of Effects;
 - **Appendix 6E:** LANDMAP Cultural Areas Assessment of Effects;
 - **Appendix 6F:** LANDMAP Landscape Habitats Areas Assessment of Effects;
 - **Appendix 6G:** LANDMAP Geological Areas Assessment of Effects;
 - **Appendix 6H:** Designated Landscapes Assessment of Effects;
 - **Appendix 6I:** Photoviewpoint Schedule of Effects;

- **Appendix 6J:** Schedule of Effects on Settlements;
- **Appendix 6K:** Schedule of Night-time Visual Effects;
- **Appendix 6M:** Residential Visual Amenity Assessment; and

ES Chapter 6: Landscape and Visual Impact containing a summary of the assessment and baseline.

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Section 2

Landscape Planning Policy and Legislation

- 2.1 An appreciation of the ‘weight’ to be attributed to any landscape or visual effects arising from development starts with an understanding of the planning context within which any such development is to be tested for its acceptability. This section appraises the relevant statutory policy context and guidance with regard to landscape and visual effects.

European Landscape Convention (2007)

- 2.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC), which was signed by the UK in February 2006 and became binding in 2007, is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape issues and aims to protect and manage landscapes in Europe and to plan positively for change within them. The ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to protection, management and creation of landscapes, and establishing procedures for the general public and other stakeholders to participate in policy creation and implementation.
- 2.3 The ELC defines landscape as *“an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”* (Council of Europe, 2004).

National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949

- 2.4 The National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty Act provides a framework for creating National Parks, including the BBNP which lies circa. 4.1km east of the closest proposed turbine. One of a National Park’s statutory duties is the promotion of public understanding and enjoyment of each Park’s special qualities (SQs) steered by a National Park Authority as guided by each Park’s statutory Management Plan. The SQs are elaborated on in **Section 3.17**.

Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

- 2.5 A National Landscape is land protected by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act). It protects the land to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Planning Policy Wales 12 (PPW12) states *“National Parks and AONBs are of equal status in terms of landscape and scenic beauty, and must both be afforded the highest status of protection from inappropriate developments”*. The Wye Valley National Landscape is located within the study area, c. 21.3km east of the Site.

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales 12 (February 2024)

- 2.6 At the heart of PPW12 is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and sustainable places; this being a theme which runs throughout the document. For landscape, this means considering landscape at the outset and recognising the character and SQs of all places and landscapes, both urban and rural, and how they can contribute towards sense of place, inspiration, belonging and cultural identity, and balancing the need to conserve these landscape attributes against the potential benefits of the scheme in other respects.
- 2.7 The policy balancing exercise between potential ‘harm’ to the landscape and benefits of the scheme is to be undertaken by the decision taker (in this case the Welsh Ministers) and falls outside the remit of this report. The benefits of the scheme are to be weighed against the effects on the landscape character and visual amenity as set out in this report, as detailed in the Planning Statement accompanying this application.

Developments of National Significance (DNS)

- 2.8 The project qualifies as a DNS which is a type of planning application for large infrastructure projects of national importance in Wales. DNS applications are decided by Planning and Environment Decisions Wales (PEDW).

Future Wales 2040

- 2.9 Future Wales is the national development framework for Wales and has development plan status. Within this plan are two policies of particular relevance to the Site and the nature of the proposals. Relevant extracts are contained below with emphasis added as underlining:

- **Policy 17** – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy and Associated Infrastructure:

“The Welsh Government strongly supports the principle of developing renewable and low carbon energy from all technologies and at all scales to meet our future energy needs.

In determining planning applications for renewable and low carbon energy development, decision-makers must give significant weight to the need to meet Wales’ international commitments and our target to generate 70% of consumed electricity by renewable means by 2030 in order to combat the climate emergency.

In Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy the Welsh Government has already modelled the likely impact on the landscape and has found them to be capable of accommodating development in an acceptable way. There is a presumption in favour of large-scale wind

energy development (including repowering) in these areas, subject to the criteria in policy 18.

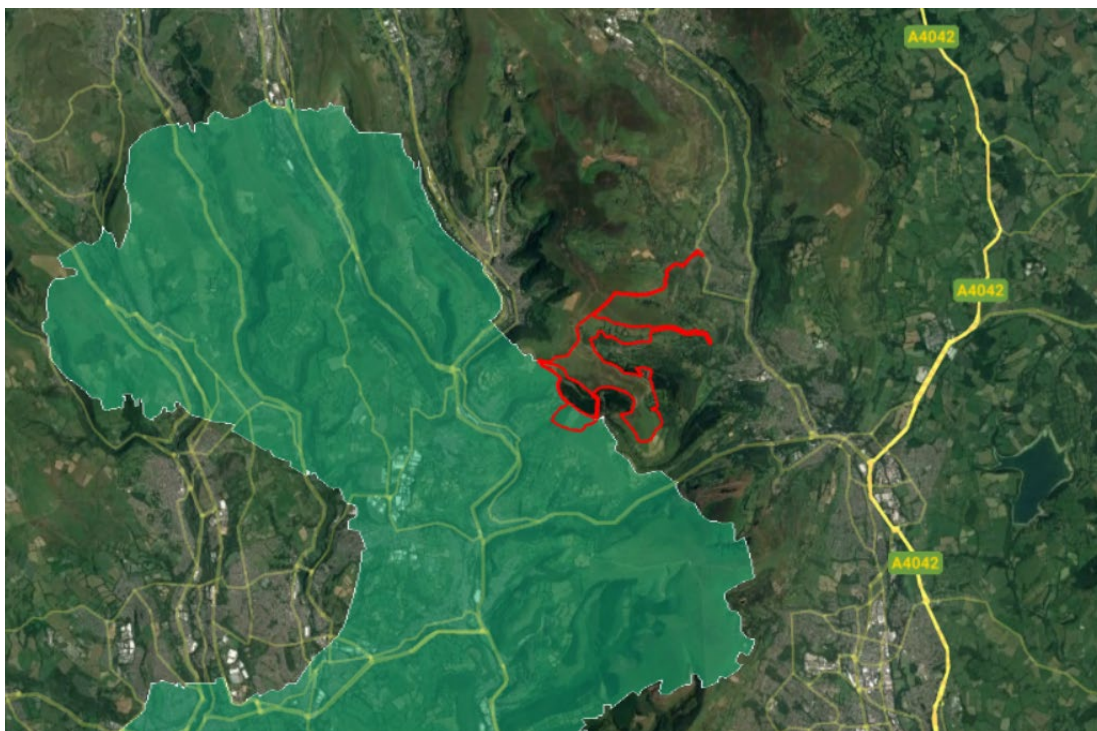


Image EDP 2.1: Pre-assessed areas for wind energy defined by WG shown by purple and the site boundary shown in red.

Applications for large-scale wind and solar will not be permitted in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and all proposals should demonstrate that they will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment.”

- **Policy 18** – Renewable and Low Carbon Energy Developments of National Significance:

“Proposals for renewable and low carbon energy projects (including repowering) qualifying as Developments of National Significance will be permitted subject to policy 17 and the following criteria:

- 1. outside of the Pre-Assessed Areas for wind developments and everywhere for all other technologies, the proposal does not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the surrounding landscape (particularly on the setting of National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty); and*
- 2. there are no unacceptable adverse visual impacts on nearby communities and individual dwellings”.*

2.10 Criteria 1 and 2 listed are two of 10 criteria set out at Policy 18 for DNS qualifying projects to accord with.

- 2.11 **Image EDP 2.1** above illustrates that only a very small proportion (c. 0.28ha) of the Site overlaps with a pre-assessed area for wind energy. The Site is outwith the BBNP and is also outwith the Wye Valley National Landscape; although both of these landscape designations are located within the Study Area and are considered further in this report.
- 2.12 It should be noted that within the published study produced to determine these areas (Assessment of onshore wind and solar energy potential in Wales, Welsh Government & Arup 2019) it states that *“this report has been carried out at a high-level, appropriate to national decision-making. The maps presented in this report are therefore not designed to present site-level accuracy”*. Furthermore, within the supporting text for Policy 17 and 18 within Future Wales 2040, it states:

“In the ‘Pre-Assessed Areas for Wind Energy’ (see Map on page 94) the Welsh Government has undertaken an assessment to identify these areas to provide certainty where, in principle, developments would be acceptable. In these areas there is a presumption in favour of large-scale on-shore wind energy development and the associated landscape change subject to the criteria in policy 18. Outside of these areas a positive policy framework still exists, subject to policy 18.”

Local Planning Policy

- 2.13 The Site falls within two LPA areas, namely TCBC and BGCB. A review of the local planning policy circumstances, including relevant supplementary planning documents, evidence base documents and associated guidelines relevant to this assessment, is contained below.
- 2.14 The following policies are considered relevant to this LVIA baseline, with extracts saved in **Annex EDP 2.0**.

Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC)

Torfaen Local Development Plan up to 2021

- 2.15 The Torfaen County Borough Council Local Development Plan (TLDP) was adopted in December 2013 and sets out the policy framework up to 2021. The LDP remains an extant ‘development plan’ until it is superseded by the Adopted Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan which is being prepared. Extant policies of relevance to the Site and Proposed Development in relation to landscape and visual amenity include the following:

- Policy S7 – Conservation of the Natural and Historic Environment:

“Development proposals should seek to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the Natural, Built and Historic Environment of Torfaen, in particular:

...

(d) Landscape setting;...”

- Policy C2 – Special Landscape Areas:

“In order to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of the defined SLA’s development proposals that could impact on these designations will be expected to conform to high standards of design and environmental protection which is appropriate to the LANDMAP character of the area.”

- HE2 Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS):

“Development proposals within, and adjacent to the BILWHS will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: -

- a) The proposal promotes a standard of design in terms of siting, scale, massing and materials, which is sympathetic to and preserves or enhances the character of the local area and settlement form;*
- b) Important views into and within the BILWHS are not adversely affected by the proposals;*
- c) The proposal contributes to ensuring the preservation of the ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ of the BILWHS designation; and*
- d) The proposal would not adversely affect the overall integrity of the BILWHS and its landscape or historic setting.*

All development proposals within and adjacent to the World Heritage Site should be informed by the BILWHS Design Guidance and should identify how the proposals are consistent with the principles in this document.

Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan

- 2.16 The Council resolved to withdraw the Torfaen Replacement Local Development Plan (2018–2033) at its meeting on the 25 April 2023 and anew Replacement LDP (2022–2037) is being prepared. It is intended that upon agreement with the Welsh Government, a new plan will commence. Until a new LDP is prepared, the policies set out in the LDP adopted on the 03 December 2013 listed above are still relevant.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC)

Blaenau Gwent Local Development Plan up to 2021

2.17 The Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Local Development Plan (BGLDP) was adopted in November 2012 and sets out the policy framework up to 2021. Policies of relevance to the Site and Proposed Development in relation to landscape and visual amenity include the following:

- Policy SP10 – Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment:

“Blaenau Gwent’s unique, natural environment and designated landscape will be protected, and, where appropriate, enhanced. This will be achieved through:

...

- d. Protecting those attributes and features which make a significant contribution to the character, quality and amenity of the landscape”.*

- Policy DM1 – ‘New Development’ states the following relevant text in relation to the site and Proposed Development:

“Development proposals will be permitted provided: -

...

2. Amenity...

- b. There would be no unacceptable adverse impact on townscape or landscape;...”*

- DM4 – Low and Zero Carbon Energy:

“The Council will encourage major development proposals to incorporate schemes which generate energy from renewable and low/zero carbon technologies. These technologies include onshore wind; landfill gas; energy crops; energy from waste; anaerobic digestion; sewage gas; hydropower; biomass; combined heat and power; and solar.

These technologies will be permitted provided that:

- a. Appropriate monitoring and investigation can demonstrate that the development will not have any unacceptable adverse impact on nature conservation and the character and appearance of the landscape...”*

- DM15 – Protection and Enhancement of the Green Infrastructure:

“Development proposals will be permitted provided:

1. *There is no loss in connectivity within the Strategic Infrastructure network which comprises:*
 - a. *River Corridors; and*
 - b. *Special Landscape Areas...*
- DM16 – Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerow Protection:

“Development proposals will be permitted provided there would not be unacceptable harm to trees, woodlands and hedgerows that have natural heritage value or contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality.”
- ENV2 – Special Landscape Areas

“Development within the defined Special Landscape Areas will be expected to conform to the highest standards of design, siting, layout and materials appropriate to the character of the area.”

Blaenau Gwent Replacement Local Development Plan

- 2.18 The emerging LDP will guide key planning and infrastructure decisions to 2033. A ‘Preferred Strategy’ was published in January 2020 setting out the emerging policy. The plan is still some way off adoption at this stage and carries very limited weight in planning terms.

Other Relevant Documents, Strategies and Initiatives

Dyfodol Y Bannau (The Future)– The Management Plan For Bannau Brycheiniog National Park 2023 -2038²

- 2.19 The National Park Authority is required by section 66(1) of the 1995 Environment Act to prepare and keep under review a Management Plan for their area. The Management Plan should set out how the purposes and duty of the National Park will be met within the geographic area of the Plan. With relevance to this assessment, the role of the management plan is stated as:

“Y Bannau: The Future, the Management Plan for the Bannau Brycheiniog (Bannau Brycheiniog) National Park is a plan of national significance and must be taken into consideration in the development of other statutory documents, such as Local Development Plans, Strategic Development Plans and other plans, programmes and policies which could have a bearing on the National Park and it’s special qualities.”

² The Management Plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park 2023-2038 (Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, 2023)

2.20 The Management Plan does not contain policies relating to the setting of the National Park nor does BBNP have a Position Statement on development within the setting of the National Park. It does set how a clear mission for the Park and what the objectives that supports this mission are, as well as the special qualities (SQs) of the Park.

2.21 The SQs of the National Park are summarised in **Section 4** of this report.

Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2021 – 2026³.

2.22 The Site is not located within the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now National Landscape); however, it is c. 21.3km to the east of the Site.

2.23 Whilst not a local authority area, the Wye Valley National Landscape Unit is in charge of producing a Management Plan in periods of five years, as required by the CRoW Act (2000). The Management Plan does not discourage new development within or near to the AONB, but instead sets out “*guidance and strategic objectives, giving support and direction to help steer positive landscape change.*”

2.24 As noted above, the Site is not located within the National Landscape, however, the management plan states the following in regard to development outside of the designated landscape:

“4.5.1 The AONB is not an isolated landscape. It is connected to the surrounding landscapes, towns and countryside, ecologically, economically, socially and through the action of natural processes such as hydrology and geomorphology. Development and other activities within the setting of the AONB may have an impact on some or all these processes. The extent of the setting will vary depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB.

4.5.2 Section 85 of the CROW Act 2000 requires public bodies to consider whether any activities outside the AONB may affect land in the AONB. Both Planning Practice Guidance (Natural Environment: 003) in England and Planning Policy Wales (Edition 10. para 6.3.5) emphasise that this duty is relevant in considering development proposals that are situated outside of the AONB boundary, but which might have an impact on the setting of the AONB.”

2.25 The key characteristics of the National Landscape are summarised in **Section 4** of this report.

³ Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2021 – 2026 (Wye Valley Joint Advisory Committee, 2021).

Other Relevant Guidance

2.26 The following guidance documents are of relevance to the Site, the nature of this proposal and this LVIA. They have been considered throughout the LVIA process both in methodology and assessment, and are listed below for reference:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment, 2013);
- Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments Guidance Note 46, Natural Resources Wales (2013);
- Designing Wind Farms in Wales, Design Commission for Wales (2014);
- Visual Representation of Wind Farms, Scottish Natural Heritage (Version 2.2) (2017);
- Guidance: Assessing the Cumulative Impact of Onshore Wind Energy Developments, Scottish Natural Heritage (March 2012);
- Siting and Designing Windfarms in the Landscape, Scottish Natural Heritage (Version 3), (2017);
- Visual representation of development proposals, Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/17 (31 March 2017);
- Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA)-Technical Guidance Note 2/19: Landscape Institute, (15 March 2019); and
- Planning Guidance for Wind Turbine Development Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Requirements, Heads of the Valleys Landscape Officers and Planners with support from The South Wales Landscape Liaison Group (2015).

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Section 3

Findings of EDP's Data Trawl

- 3.1 An appreciation of the 'weight' to be attributed to any landscape or visual effects arising from development starts with an understanding of the landscape designations and planning context within which any such development is to be tested for its acceptability.
- 3.2 EDP has conducted a data trawl of findings of the relevant designations and matters, the findings of which are set out below and the locations of which are illustrated on **Figure 6.3, 6.4, 6.15, 6.16, 6.18 and 6.19.**

Background Documents

- 3.3 The following documents are relevant and will be discussed where appropriate later in this report:
- Blaenavon Industrial Landscape: World Heritage Site Management Plan (1999);
 - Brecon Beacons National Park Local Development Plan 2007-2022 (Adopted 2013);
 - Future Beacons, The Management Plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park 2022-2027, Consultation Draft;
 - BBNPA: Landscape and Development SPD (2014);
 - BBNP: Landscape Character Assessment (2012);
 - Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2021 – 2026 (2021);
 - Pontypool Town Centre Conservation Area Design Guide (2011); and
 - Pontypool Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Draft).

Findings of EDP Data Trawl

Landscape-related Designations on Site

3.4 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within the wider study area boundary are shown on **Figure 6.3** and within 5km on **Figure 6.4**. The following landscape-related policies relevant to the Site are summarised below:

- National landscape designations – the Site does not lie within an international or nationally designated landscape such as an AONB or National Park;
- Local non-statutory landscape designations – the Site boundary overlaps with three SLAs. SLAs and VILLS are shown on **Figure 6.15**. SLAs on or adjacent to the Site include:
 - *St Illtyd Plateau and Ebbw Eastern Side SLAs*;
 - *Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James SLA*; and
 - *Western Uplands SLA*.
- There are numerous PRoW within the Site boundary and much of the Site is Common Land.

3.5 These landscape designations are discussed in further detail at **Section 4** of this report.

Landscape-related Designations within 5km

3.6 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within 5km of the Site at the closest point is shown on **Figure 6.4**, those relevant to the Site are summarised below:

- International designations:
 - BILWHS is a designated heritage asset as awarded by UNESCO. BILWHS is located at a minimum distance of c. 3.7km to the north-east of the closest turbine proposed; and
 - Brecon Beacons International Dark Skies Reserve is defined by the boundary of the national park which is located c. 4.1km to the east of the Site at its closest point.
- National landscape designations:
 - BBNP is located c. 4.1km to the east of the Site at its closest point; and
 - Pen-y-fan Pond Country Park is located c. 3.3km to the west of the Site at its closest point. It is a popular recreational destination in summer and allows

organised water-based activities including fishing, canoeing and paddleboarding. Country parks are described by Lle Geo-Portal as an area within the countryside environment designated for public enjoyment and recreation. These parks are not necessarily designated in recognition of, or for the protection of landscape quality, however, their use as accessible and attractive green spaces means that they hold a high local value.

- Local Landscape designations namely SLAs, VILLs, and one Country Park are as follows:

- SLAs and VILLs:

Blaenau Gwent SLAs	Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn and Cefn yr Arail Cwm Tyleri & Cwm Celyn Cefn Manmoel
Torfaen SLAs	Western Uplands Afon Lwyd Valley South West Uplands Eastern Uplands Blaenavon Heritage Landscape
Caerphilly VILLs	Abercarn

- Other landscape-related designations which are nationally or locally designated are as follows:
 - Blaenavon Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest (BLOHI). This is a non-statutory designation that overlaps in part the BILWHS which is located at a minimum distance of c. 4km to the north-east from the closest proposed turbine;
 - Pontypool Park RPG is located c. 3.3km to the east the Site at its closest point;
 - Six Scheduled Monuments and a dispersed group of listed buildings which are largely concentrated in more settled low lying locations; and
 - Six local nature reserves within 5km of the Site.

Brecon Beacons National Park

- 3.7 The Brecon Beacons gained National Park status in 1957 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The National Park designation is for the “*purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and to provide opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the Park by the public*”.
- 3.8 The BBNPA LDP 2007-2022 (adopted 2013) sets out planning policy relating to development within the National Park. The document acknowledges that there are some types of development that fall outside of the designated boundary that will be party to

BBNP local policy if said development could impact upon the National Park (underlined for emphasis):

“Cross Boundary Issues include for example wind energy development and transport infrastructure. Section 62(2) of the Environment Act (1995) places a duty on certain bodies to have regard to the National Park Purposes in undertaking activity which could have an impact on the National Park. The Authority will use Policy SP1 in considering proposals within its planning jurisdiction. In commenting on proposals that impact on the National Park the Authority will aim to ensure that S62(2) is observed through the application of SP1.”

3.9 Policy SP1 National Park Policy:

“Development in the National Park will be required to comply with the purposes and statutory duty set out in legislation, and will be permitted where it:

- a) conserves and enhances the Natural Beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the Park; and/or*
- b) provides for, or supports, the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the National Park in a way that does not harm those qualities; and*
- c) fulfils the two purposes above and assists the economic and social well being of local communities.”*

3.10 The BBNPA also produced the Landscape and Development Supplementary Planning Guidance (2014) document which *“seeks to ensure a sustainable future for our communities and this special landscape by seeking to manage the scale of landscape change posed by development”*, providing guidance on how landscape character within the BBNP can be conserved and enhanced.

3.11 BBNP has an International Dark Skies Reserve status. The night-time baseline scenario has been considered in **Section 6**.

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape UNESCO World Heritage Site

3.12 The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape or BILWHS is *“one of the finest surviving examples in the world of a landscape created by coal mining and ironmaking in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries”*. It was awarded World Heritage Status in 2000 in recognition of its uniquely preserved heritage. Although this is a heritage designation, its landscape character forms an important part of this culture and heritage and therefore is considered as part of this assessment at **Section 4**.

3.13 It is the responsibility of National Governments to protect World Heritage Sites. PPW 12 paragraph 6.1.6 states that *“the Welsh Government’s specific objectives for the historic environment seek to: protect the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Sites...”*

3.14 Furthermore, PPW 12 paragraph 6.1.22 states that *“The impacts of proposed developments on a World Heritage Site and its setting and, where it exists, the World Heritage Site buffer zone and its essential setting, is a material consideration in the determination of any planning application”*.

3.15 As mentioned within the previous section, Policy HE2 of the TLDP relates to the BILWHS and refers to the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site Design Guide (2011) which states the following regarding wind farm development: *“Wind turbines are less easy to disguise and will not normally be acceptable if visible within the wider landscape”*.

3.16 The design guide recognises the following as key views within the area to be protected:

- Long-distance views along Broad Street, Blaenavon Town Centre;
- High Street; and
- Across Coity Mountain.

Landscape-related Designations within 5-15km

3.17 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within wider study area are shown on **Figure 6.3** and **Figure 6.15**. The landscape-related policies relevant to the Site are summarised below:

- There are no additional international or national landscape designations within 5-15km of the Site that are not mentioned within 5km;
- Local landscape designations:
 - Country Parks:

Caerphilly	Parc Coertir Bargod, 7km Parc Cwm Darran, 7.6km Sirhowy Valley, 8.3km Parc Penallta, 10.3km
Caerphilly and Blaenau Gwent	Brynbach, 11.2km
Monmouthshire	Clytha Park, 12.8km

- SLAs and VILLs:

Blaenau Gwent SLAs	Cwm Tyleri & Cwm Celyn Mynydd Bedwellty, Rhymney & Sirhowy Sides Beaufort Common Trefil and Garnlydan Surrounds
Torfaen SLAs	Llandegfedd Reservoir South Eastern Lowlands Southern Lowlands
Caerphilly SLAs	Mynddislwyn Gelligaer North Caerphilly Mynydd Eglwysilan South Caerphilly Upper Rhymney Valley
Caerphilly VILLs	Manmoel Northern Rhymney Valley Rudry

- Other designations which are nationally, or internationally designated:
 - Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); and
 - RPGs, Scheduled monuments and Listed buildings.
- Other Local designations - There are 42 conservations areas, and 17 local nature reserves.

Landscape-related Designations within 15- 26km

3.18 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within 26km of the Site are shown on **Figure 6.3**. The following landscape-related policies relevant to the Site are summarised below:

- There are no additional International or local landscape designations between 15km and 26km of the Site that have not been mentioned above, within 5km to 15km of the Site;
- National landscape designations:
 - Wye Valley AONB is at a distance of c. 21.3km to the east of the closest turbine proposed.

Wye Valley AONB

3.19 The Wye Valley AONB stretches some 48km along the Wye Valley spanning four authority boundaries. The south-westerly flank of the AONB is within the 26km Study Area as shown on **Figure 6.7**. The AONB Partnership advises on planning matters likely to have

significant and detrimental effects on the AONB and produced the AONB Management Plan (2021) which is a statutory document of material consideration in planning terms.

3.20 The management plan states that:

“The AONB is not an isolated landscape. It is connected to the surrounding landscapes, towns and countryside, ecologically, economically, socially and through the action of natural processes such as hydrology and geomorphology. Development and other activities within the setting of the AONB may have an impact on some or all these processes. The extent of the setting will vary depending upon the issues considered but some can be mapped, for example, the impact of development on views into and out of the AONB.”

3.21 Although the distance between the Site and the AONB is substantial, potential interrelationships between landscape character and views between the Site and the AONB are considered at **Section 4** and **5** of this report.

National Trails and Coastal Paths

3.22 **Figure 6.18** shows Promoted Routes and Cycle Ways. There are no National Trails within 15km of the Site, the closest (Offas Dyke) is 18km north-east. Offas Dyke is a 285km long walking trail which runs north-south from Prestatyn to Chepstow, weaving between Wales and England along this border. The route passes through the BBNP and through three AONBs including the Wye Valley.

3.23 The Wales Coastal Path is a little over 15km south of the Site at its closest point where the route comes into Newport along the River Usk. No section of the coastal path within the 26km broad study area is designated as a national trail.

Public Rights of Way

3.24 **Figure 6.19** shows PRoW within **15km** of the Site. There are no PRoW that overlap with the locations of the proposed turbines, however, some PRoW overlap with existing roads within the site boundary as well as across fields and the open plateau on site. There is a frequent network of PRoW that lie within or adjacent to the site boundary and these are summarised in **Table EDP 3.2** below.

Table EDP 3.2: PRoW within or adjacent to the Site.

PROW type	Reference	Description
Footpath (FP)	413/80	This connecting group of PRoW crosses the northern part of the site. The majority of these cross open land and FP 413/82 and 413/83 are the longest of these cross-country routes. 413/88 follows the alignment of the existing road which progresses north-east. Further along the road PRoW connects to 413/90 which continues along the road for a short stretch and tapers off site to the east. 413/94 also joins 413/88 and this route progresses north off site.
	413/82	
	413/83	
	413/88	
	413/90	
	413/94	
	331/174	
	331/176	

PROW type	Reference	Description
	413/135	A short FP at the access point that connects Farm Road to the B4246, which is isolated from the PROw network.
	337/10	A short FP that runs from PROw a short distance from the boundary to the west, into the Site before coming to bridleways 337/9 and 337/7.
	423/102	These routes lie or connect to PROw located in the central plateau of the Site. 423/102 runs broadly north-west to south-east and connects to 423/100 and 101.
	423/100	
	423/101	
	337/118	
	337/119	337/117 runs diagonally across the plateau. It connects to short PROw 337/119 near the north-west site boundary, and to the south, to 423/20 (A) and 20 which then progresses south through the blue lagoon and off site.
	423/20	
	423/20 (A)	
	337/65	337/65 runs parallel to 423/20 in the south of the Site. The route runs south-west from Blaen-Y-cwm Road and spurs off to join 337/64 and 337/68 before these routes progress to the south-west and off Site.
	337/67	
	337/64	
	337/68	This FP runs from just inside the south-west boundary out in a south-west direction along the valley slope.
	423/44	FP 44 enters the site from the south, heads north-east over the plateau then dips back into the valley on the other side to the south-east.
Bridleway (BR)	337/117	This group of PROw converge and terminate adjacent to the site boundary. The route runs north-south across the centre of the Site. It heads south across the plateau before dipping into the small, wooded valley and past the 'Blue Lagoon' then south-west out of the Site along the valley shoulder.
	337/7	
	331/174	
	331/24	
Road Used as Public Path (RUPP)	337/57	These routes cross Blaen-y-cwm Road and the unnamed road on site at various points. 337/56 forks off from BR 337/58 in a south-east direction along the valley shoulder before coming meeting Rupp 337/57.
	337/33	
	337/56	
	337/58	
	337/53	

PROw within 5km of the Site

- 3.25 Similar to those on and adjacent to the Site, the PROw network within the 5km of the Site is well connected. Generally, PROws are found at the edges of settlements along the valley slopes, with some PROw crossing the plateau connecting settlements on either side. The PROw mostly consists of footpaths with some Bridleways and roads used as public paths (RUPPs). There are very few Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATs) within 5km of the Site.

PROw within 15km of the Site

- 3.26 The PROw network across the detailed study area is well connected and are more concentrated at settlement edges with arms connecting valleys across the ridges and

plateaux. PRow often run along the contours of the valley slopes connecting the linear settlements.

Promoted and Long-distance Routes within 15km

3.27 **Figure 6.18** shows Promoted Routes and Cycle Ways within the study area. These routes are summarised in the list below in order of distance at their closest point from the nearest turbine:

1. The closest promoted route is the Torfaen Trail, a 56km route which forms a figure of eight running north-south approximately c. 1km the west of the Site. The route passes through Blaenavon, Pontypool, and Cwmbran;
2. The Cistercian Way is a long-distance path located c. 5km south-east of the Site. The route enters Cwmbran from a north-easterly direction then runs south-west into Caerphilly. This is the UK's longest heritage footpath, which is a circular route that stretches over 1,000km across Wales from north to south and east to west;
3. The Usk Valley Way is approximately 9km from the Site at and follows the River Usk through Powys and Monmouthshire the north and west of the site;
4. The Rymney Valley Ridge Way is a circular route c. 9km south-west. This route follows part of the Cistercian Way before looking back to the north, across the hills that encircle the Rymney Valley; and
5. The Beacons Way ends c. 12km north-east with most of the route located over 15km away from the Site. This route weaves through the BBNP east to west and is about 160km in length.

3.28 Routes that are located at a greater distance than 15km from Site include the Wye Valley Walk and the Coed Morgannwg Way, both of which are shown on **Figure 6.18**.

3.29 The Sustrans Cycle Network is a vast national cycle network and a series of cycle routes within the LVIA study area that fall within the blade tip ZTV. A representative sample set of the cycle route with potential to experience visual effects will be considered further in the assessment.

Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Access Land

3.30 There are many areas of CRoW Access Land across the Study Area with up to 50 within 5km of the Site. These are illustrated on **Figure 6.19**. There is some CRoW Access Land adjacent to and crossing the central part of the Site. The common land boundary wraps around the valley edge between the Site and Pontnewynydd. Common land overlaps the Site along higher ground and along the access track. There is also a small section overlapping with the most south-westerly extent of the Site.

Ecological Matters

- 3.31 **Chapter 8** of the ES assesses ecological assets within the Study Area. While ecological designations are not landscape designations, they do, on occasion, serve to influence the character of the landscape and can inform landscape value.
- 3.32 The Site does not host any international statutory designations, nor are there any within 5km of the Site. There are, however, areas of ancient woodland within and adjacent to the site boundary, which is a national, non-statutory designation. There is also one site of special scientific interest (SSSI), a national, statutory designation, that is approximately 800m from the site boundary. Ty'r Hen Forwyn SSSI is designated for its population of rare grassland. There are also six Local Nature Reserves within 5km of the site which are local statutory designations.

Heritage Matters

- 3.33 As with the ecological considerations, the heritage effects are not considered in the LVIA. Heritage assets and their settings are considered only insofar as they might make a contribution to the character and visual amenity of an area. Heritage assets within 5km of the Site are shown on **Figure 6.4**. As the Site does not overlap with any heritage assets, there would be no direct landscape effects on such assets as a result of the proposals. Potential effects from publicly accessible areas that coincide with heritage assets are investigated further from a landscape and visual perspective.
- 3.34 For a detailed assessment of effects on archaeology and heritage, please refer to the **Chapter 7** of the ES.

Conservation Areas

- 3.35 Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, Listed Buildings and Registered Parks Registered Historic Park and Gardens (HPG) are all heritage assets that can contribute to the landscape character and perceptual qualities of a landscape.
- 3.36 Conservation Areas (CAs) are a local non-statutory designation covering places of special architectural or historic interest. There are six CAs within 5km of the Site:
1. Cwmavon CA to the north-east;
 2. Pontypool CA to the east;
 3. Upper Cwmbran CA to the south-east;
 4. Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal CA to the west;
 5. Newbridge CA to the south-west; and
 6. Oakdale CA to the south-west.

Scheduled Monuments

- 3.37 The closest scheduled monuments are Cwmbyrgwm Colliery located approximately 600m north-east of the Site and St Illtyd Castle Mound located approximately 1.7km to the west of the Site. Nearly all Scheduled Monuments within 5km of the Site are associated with the area's industrial history including mining and transportation. The exception to this is St Illtyd Castle Mound.

Listed Buildings

- 3.38 The closest listed buildings include Hafodarthyn farmhouse located c. 500m to the west and a chimney associated with the Cwmbyrgwn Colliery Scheduled Monument located c. 800m to the north. There are also listed buildings adjacent to the St Illtyd Castle Mound Scheduled monument including the Grade II* listed St Illtyd's Church. Listed buildings are largely contained within the valleys, in settlements or in historic ironworks.

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Section 4

Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Landscape Character

- 4.1 This section provides an assessment of the ‘baseline’ (existing) conditions in respect of the character of the Site and its landscape context. It summarises any relevant published landscape assessments which contribute to a better understanding of the landscape context. Such assessments provide a helpful understanding of the landscape context, but rarely deliver sufficiently site-specific or up to date information to draw robust conclusions about the significance of any change proposed by the development. Accordingly, EDP has undertaken its own assessment of the Site itself, which is included in this section.

National Character Assessment

- 4.2 At the national level, the character of Wales has been described and classified in the National Landscape Character Area (NLCA) profiles published by Natural Resource Wales⁴. The Site and its surroundings fall within NLCA 37, ‘South Wales Valleys’. The NLCA is summarised as:

“Many deep, urbanised valleys dissect an extensive upland area. Combined with industrial heritage and the distinct identity of its people, the South Wales Valleys provide some of Wales’ most widely known and iconic national images.

Extensive ribbon development fills many valley bottoms and lower slopes. Their urban and industrial character is juxtaposed with dramatic upland settings with steep hillsides, open moors or forests. Networks of railways and roads connect valley settlements. Topography constrains passage between valleys, and there are only a limited number of high passes between valleys. The noise and business of many valleys contrast with the relatively remote and wild qualities of adjacent hill plateaux.”

- 4.3 While NLCA 39 is broadly representative of the Site’s landscape context, for the scale of the Site, the LANDMAP and local area assessments are of much greater use in establishing the landscape resource baseline.

LANDMAP

- 4.4 In order to assess the acceptability of development in landscape terms at any specific location, it is important to understand the landscape and visual amenity circumstances against which any decisions are made, based on both published landscape character assessments and more site-specific landscape assessment undertaken through field studies and site appraisal.

⁴ <https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/maps/nlca/?lang=en>

4.5 The landscape character of the Site and the surrounding area is defined within the LANDMAP resource managed by NRW. LANDMAP is the national information system used to undertake an assessment of the landscape character as presented by the LANDMAP Geographical Information System (GIS).

4.6 LANDMAP data is the key tool recommended for use in decision-making in relation to landscape character. PPW 12 (Welsh Assembly Government, 2024) Section 6.3.19 states:

“LANDMAP is an important information resource, methodology, and monitoring baseline for the landscapes of Wales, which can help inform planning for the sustainable management of natural resources in an area. LANDMAP describes and evaluates the physical, ecological, visual, cultural and historic aspects of the landscapes of Wales, and provides the basis of a consistent, quality assured national approach to landscape assessment. LANDMAP assessments can help to inform green infrastructure assessments, SPG on landscape, development management decisions, landscape character assessment, special landscape areas (SLAs), local distinctiveness, design, and landscape sensitivity studies”.

4.7 LANDMAP is a GIS-based landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated into a nationally consistent data set. Data is defined by five layers or themes, the Geological Landscape, Landscape Habitats, Visual and Sensory, Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape, forming the key landscape guidance for Wales.

4.8 LANDMAP is a whole landscape approach that covers all landscapes, designated and non-designated. It identifies key landscape characteristics and qualities that can be used to aid planning policy and decisions. The accompanying guidance states that it is the use of all five layers of information that promotes sustainable landscape decision-making, giving all five layers equal consideration.

4.9 The Site is contained within 5no. LANDMAP ‘aspect areas’, as summarised in **Tables EDP 4.1 to 4.5** below. Each theme/layer is described, assessed and assigned one of four overall grades of value: low, moderate, high or outstanding in LANDMAP. Summary LANDMAP descriptions are provided on the NRW website.

Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas (VSAA)

4.10 The most pertinent to the LANDMAP appraisal is the Visual and Sensory aspect area and there are six that cover this Site.

4.11 **Figure 6.23** shows the Level 3 Classifications of LANDMAP VSAA that are of high or outstanding overall evaluations, or moderate overall evaluation where scenic quality and/or character evaluation is high or outstanding; and that are located within 26km ZTV to tip height. **Figure 6.24** shows the corresponding evaluations for the VSAA. **Table EDP 4.1** below summarises LANDMAP VSAA covering the Site.

Table EDP 4.1: LANDMAP VSAA Covering the Site

Unique Area ID	Area Name/Classification	Evaluation
BLNGWVS226	St. Illtyd	High
BLNGWVS688	Mynydd Bedwellte	High
BLNGWVS985	Lower Ebbw Valley	High
TRFNVS019	NULL	High
TRFNVS022	NULL	Moderate
TRFNVS024	NULL	High

- 4.12 Five of the aspect areas are attributed a 'high' overall evaluation and the remaining has a 'moderate' overall evaluation. **BLNGWVS688** 'Mynydd Bedwellte' covers a large area of the Site to the north-west; its 'high' overall evaluation justified as being the "*clear 'backbones' to valley character*". 'St Illtyd', also attributed a 'high' overall evaluation is due to its "*attractive 'traditional' farmland with good trees, views etc*". 'Lower Ebbw Valley' is attributed its high overall evaluation because it is an "*important backdrop to local settlements*". Aspect areas **TRFNVS019** and **TRFNVS024** are both attributed a 'high' overall evaluation for their "*attractive upland views*" and "*strong sense of place*". **TRFNVS022** is attributed a 'moderate' overall evaluation, however, it is also attributed a 'high' evaluation of scenic quality due to its views to the adjacent uplands.
- 4.13 Beyond the extents of the Site and following the best practice guidance filtering process, VSAA that overlap with the 26km ZTV to tip were identified. In order to take a pragmatic approach to the assessment, additional filters have been applied to reduce the scope of assessment where significant effects are deemed highly unlikely. The approach taken in the ES considers the extent of visibility verses the likelihood for significant effects. Where the proposals are theoretically visible (tip height ZTV used) from less than 20% of a given aspect area, they have been scoped out from further assessment as it is reasonable to assume that potential indirect landscape effects on a small proportion of a LANDMAP aspect area is unlikely to give rise to significant effects.
- 4.14 The resulting number of VSAA to be assessed in the ES in total is 73 and these are illustrated on **Figure 6.23**.

Historic Landscape Aspect Areas (HLAA)

- 4.15 **Figure 6.25** shows the Level 3 Classifications of LANDMAP HLAA that are of moderate, high or outstanding overall evaluations and that are located within 26km ZTV to tip height. **Figure 6.26** shows the overall evaluation of these HLAA.

Table EDP 4.2: LANDMAP HLAA Covering the Site

Unique Area ID	Area Name/Classification	Evaluation
BLNGWHL025	Mynydd Coety	High
BLNGWHL044	St Illtyd Fieldscape	Outstanding
TRFNHL012	Pontypool	Outstanding
TRFNHL019	Waun-wen and Mynydd Llanhilleth	High
TRFNHL017	Waun-wen and Mynydd Llanhilleth: V	Outstanding

- 4.16 All HLAA covering the Site are evaluated as ‘High’ and ‘Outstanding’, which are the two highest evaluations given by LANDMAP. The aspect areas that are given overall evaluations of ‘High’ include **BLNGWHL025** ‘Mynydd Coety’ and **TRFNHL019** ‘Waun-wen and Mynydd Llanhilleth’. Together, these aspect areas cover most of the Site and are both described as unenclosed uplands that have remained largely unchanged.
- 4.17 The ‘Outstanding’ HLAA that fall within the Site cover the Site’s edges where the plateau begins to fall into the valleys. The outstanding overall evaluation attributed to **TRFNHL017** ‘Waun-wen and Mynydd Llanhilleth: V’ is justified due to *“the survival of the complex 19th-20th century industrial landscape”* including the well preserved, rare and nationally important structural remains associated with 19th and 20th century ironworks and collieries. The outstanding overall evaluation attributed to **BLNGWHL044** ‘St Illtyd Fieldscape’ is justified as it is a well-preserved fieldscape with little industrial intrusion and it is *“distinguished by a cluster of significant medieval monuments in the vicinity of Llanhilleth, including St Illtyd’s Church.”* **TRFNHL012** Pontypool overlaps with access point of the Site only within nucleated settlement.
- 4.18 Beyond the extents of the Site and following the best practice guidance filtering process, HLAA that overlap with the 26km ZTV to tip were identified. As with the VSAA, the same pragmatic approach to the assessment has been applied whereby additional filters were used to reduce the scope of assessment where significant effects deemed highly unlikely. The approach taken in the ES is where the proposals are only theoretically visibly (tip height ZTV used) from less than 20% of a given aspect area, they have been scoped out from further assessment as it is reasonable to assume that potential indirect landscape effects on a small proportion of a LANDMAP aspect area is unlikely to give rise to significant effects.
- 4.19 The resulting number of HLAA to be assessed in the ES is 96 and these are illustrated on **Figure 6.25**.

Cultural Landscape Aspect Areas (CLAA)

- 4.20 **Figure 6.27** shows the Level 3 Classifications of LANDMAP CLAA that are located within or adjacent to the site boundary. **Table EDP 4.3** below lists these CLAA.

Table EDP 4.3: LANDMAP CLAA Covering the Site

Unique Area ID	Area Name/Classification	Evaluation Scenic Quality/Character
BLNGWCLS004	Upland Grazing	High/high
BLNGWCLS022	Wooded Upland Valleys	Low/Moderate
BLNGWCLS025	Upland Moorland	High/high
BLNGWCLS055	Open/wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys	High/high
TRFNCLS013	Upland Grazing	High/high
TRFNCLS014	Open/wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys	Moderate/moderate
TRFNCLS015	Hillside & Scarp Slopes Grazing	High/Moderate
TRFNCLS018	Upland Grazing	High/high
TRFNCLS019	Upland Grazing	High/high
TRFNCLS022	Derelict/Waste Ground	Low/moderate
TRFNCLS033	Open/wooded Mosaic Upland Valleys	Moderate/moderate
TRFNCLS035	Urban	Low/low

- 4.21 The CLAA covering the Site are described mostly as having both high scenic quality and character. This high evaluation generally covers the upland, whereas the lower evaluations are given to more of the valley aspect areas, including **BLNGWCLS022** which is given the lowest evaluation of low scenic quality and moderate character.
- 4.22 LANDMAP CLAA do not include 'overall' evaluations information, therefore all aspect areas within or adjacent to the Site that overlap with the ZTV will be assessed in the ES.

Landscape Habitat Aspect Area (LHAA)

- 4.23 **Figure 6.28** shows the Level 3 Classifications of LANDMAP LHAA that are located within or adjacent to the Site boundary. **Figure 6.29** shows that overall evaluation of these aspect areas. **Table EDP 4.4** below lists these LHAA.

Table EDP 4.4: LANDMAP LHAA covering the Site

Unique Area ID	Area Name/Classification	Connectivity/Cohesion (Q42)	Overall Evaluation (Q45)
BLNGWLH058	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Mosaic/ Mosaic	Moderate	High
BLNGWLH059	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/Grassland & Marsh/Improved Grassland	Moderate	Moderate

Unique Area ID	Area Name/Classification	Connectivity/Cohesion (Q42)	Overall Evaluation (Q45)
BLNGWLH061	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Grassland & Marsh/ Acid Grassland	High	High
BLNGWLH062	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Grassland & Marsh/ Acid Grassland	Unassessed	Moderate
BLNGWLH063	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Grassland & Marsh/ Improved Grassland	Moderate	Moderate
TRFNLH005	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Built Up Areas/ Residential/Green Space	Low	Moderate
TRFNLH015	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Grassland & Marsh/ Marsh/Marshy Grassland	Moderate	Moderate
TRFNLH017	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Grassland & Marsh/ Acid Grassland	Moderate	Moderate
TRFNLH036	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Grassland & Marsh/ Mosaic	Low	High
TRFNLH042	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Heathland/ Mosaic	High	Moderate
TRFNLH044	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Mosaic/ Mosaic	Low	Moderate
TRFNLH050	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Woodland & Scrub/ Mixed Woodland	High	High
TRFNLH056	Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/ Grassland & Marsh/ Acid Grassland	High	High

4.24 The LHAA covering the Site vary from ‘moderate’, and ‘high’ overall evaluations and there are no outstanding evaluations. Generally, there are more LHAA evaluated as ‘moderate’ and only five aspect areas evaluated as high. Only four areas score highly with respect to connectivity/cohesion (Q42).

4.25 In accordance with best practice filtering guidance for LANDMAP assessment, all LHAA that overlap with the Site irrespective of their evaluation, those that are within the ZTV, and those that are evaluated as ‘high’ or ‘outstanding’ with respect to LANDMAP Q42 and/or Q45 will be assessed in the ES.

Geological Landscape Aspect Area (GLAA)

4.26 **Figure 6.30** shows the Level 3 Classifications of LANDMAP GLAA that are of moderate, high or outstanding overall evaluations and that are located within or adjacent to the Site. **Figure 6.31** shows that overall evaluation of these GLAA. **Table EDP 4.5** shows GLAA covering the Site.

Table EDP 4.5: LANDMAP Geological Landscape Aspect Areas (GLAA) Covering the Site

Unique Area ID	Area Name/ Classification	Special Link to Adjacent Area (LANDMAP Q2)	Overall Evaluation (LANDMAP Q33)
BLNGWGL022	NULL	No	Moderate
BLNGWGL023	NULL	No	Moderate
TRFNGL003	Cwm y Glyn	Yes	High
TRFNGL014	Cwm Du	Yes; TRFN016 - lower valley	High
TRFNGL013	Plas y Coed	No	Moderate
TRFNGL015	Waun Wen	Yes; TRFN016 - lower valley	Moderate
TRFBGL016	Mynydd Farteg Fach	Yes TRFN014 and TRFN015; lower reaches of valleys	High

- 4.27 The GLAA covering the Site are a mix of ‘moderate’ and ‘high’ overall evaluations. All of the above GLAA are ascribed a ‘moderate’ evaluation for rarity/uniqueness (LANDMAP Survey Q31). **TRFNGL014** ‘Cwm Du’, which covers the north-east of the Site is ascribed a ‘high’ overall evaluation for its *“U-shaped valley in Pennant succession, with eroded cirque at head. Extensive old coal mining workings.”* Similarly, the **TRFNGL003** ‘Cwm y Glyn’ covering a small area at the Site's southern boundary is attributed a high overall evaluation for its *“U-shaped, fault controlled dry valley; Productive Coal Fm mine debris.”*
- 4.28 The rest of the GLAA that cover the Site have been attributed an overall evaluation of ‘moderate’. **BLNGWGL022** and **BLNGWGL023** to the west side of the Site are both given an overall evaluation as ‘moderate’, justified as an *“outcrop of widespread Upper Pennant”* and with a small area of Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGS) within both aspect areas that has minor or no influence on the geological landscape aspect. The same RIGS site is also within aspect area ‘Plas y Coed’ and this is more significant within this geological landscape. **TRFNGL013** ‘Plas y Coed’ is attributed a ‘moderate’ overall evaluation that is justified in its *“Upland plateau in Pennant succession with Mynyddislwyn coal, dissected by glacial valley; coal tips.”*
- 4.29 In accordance with best practice filtering guidance for LANDMAP assessment, all GLAA that overlap with the Site, irrespective of their evaluation, those that record a special relationship with other aspect areas (LANDMAP Q2), those that are within the ZTV, and those that are evaluated as ‘high’ or ‘outstanding’ with respect to LANDMAP Q31 or Q33 will be assessed in the ES.

Published Landscape Character

- 4.30 A search of published landscape character assessments has shown there to be no landscape character assessments across the site undertaken independently from the

assessment found within LANDMAP. In addition, there are two SLAs that overlap with Site and their relevant character is described below.

Special Landscape Areas

4.31 **Figure 6.15** shows the distribution of SLAs within the study area in combination with the ZTV to tip height. The SLA covering the Site (Host SLAs) include:

- St. Illtyd plateau and Ebbw Valley sides SLA;
- Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James SLA; and
- Western Uplands SLA.

4.32 The SQs and features of each SLA considered relevant to the Site are summarised starting with St. Illtyd plateau and Ebbw Valley sides SLA:

“St. Illtyd plateau:

- *Well-preserved pattern of pre-industrial farmland of small rectangular fields with distinctive stone walls and overgrown beech and holly hedges, centred on, and integral with, early settlement of St. Illtyd, of considerable historic and cultural significance;*
- *Panoramic views especially west and south, to other plateau landscapes;*
- *Remote from busy valleys, with ‘other world’ atmosphere due to obvious pre-industrial character;*
- *Two areas of acid and neutral grassland are cSINCs, also LBAP priority habitats; and*
- *Old hedges are of considerable biodiversity value as well as historic and visual value.”*

“Ebbw Valley sides:

- *Valley sides form attractive backdrop to main valley settlements and routes, due to convoluted topography and a variety of semi-natural vegetation;*
- *Mosaic of native woodland with bracken, dry heath and conifer plantations, plus areas of unimproved acid grassland;*
- *Five areas of upland oak woodland with beech are cSINCs, LBAP priority habitats; and*
- *The minor side valleys provide recreational links to uplands.”*

4.33 The SQs and features of the Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James SLA which are considered relevant to the Site are described below:

“Open upland:

- *Unimproved acid grassland, with areas of bog, bare peat, flush, dry heath. All part of BAP habitat – upland heath in good condition. All the open land is SINC;*
- *Wealth of archaeological remains representing many phases of human history from prehistoric to recent, including evidence of mining and industry which may relate to activities within Blaenavon Registered Historic Landscape. Eastern parts of the area are within the Blaenavon Registered Historic Landscape (but not the WHS);*
- *Remnants of patches (early opencast coal extraction) on either side of Blaenavon Road;*
- *Remote and bleak in contrast to adjacent valley, with panoramic and distant views, and forming distinctive and remote skylines; and*
- *Spectacular but secluded gorge in southernmost forestry.”*

“Valley sides:

- *Form varied backdrops for valley settlements and routes throughout;*
- *Bourneville Slip is cSINC for mosaic of habitats, including neutral and acidic grasslands, mire, open water and wet heathland. Also contains dwarf shrub heath, an LBAP habitat; and*
- *Part of important gap between Heads of the Valleys and mid valley settlements.”*

“Northern slopes:

- *Prominent backdrop and skylines from Brynmawr and Heads of the Valleys road;*
- *Areas of patches and other early workings, of historic value; and*
- *Remnants of various communication routes between Brynmawr and Clydach Gorge, of historic interest.”*

4.34 The SQs and features of the Western Uplands SLA which are considered relevant to the Site are described below:

- *“Area includes a distinct landscape character form and mix;*

- *Forms key setting to redevelopment of The British site and is adjacent to the Blaenavon World Heritage Site boundary;*
 - *..Dissected by a series of small valleys, more enclosed and vegetated with a regular pattern of small side fields bounded by hedgerows and walls and small areas of broadleaved woodland..*
 - *The uplands have a vast, open character, mostly covered in dry heathland and acid grasslands but with a strong sense of place; and*
 - *The SLA exhibits the impacts of post medieval industrial landscapes upon the post medieval agricultural landscape which results in the area being archaeologically sensitivity."*
- 4.35 Overall, given the Site's general consistency, the host SLAs are considered to be of **high** sensitivity to development.
- 4.36 Brecon Beacons Landscape Character Assessment (August 2012) is another published character assessment of relevance to the Site context, and this is discussed below.

Brecon Beacons National Park

Special Qualities of the BBNP

- 4.37 The overarching SQs of the BBNP are defined within Future Beacons, the Management Plan for the Brecon Beacons National Park Consultation Draft and are described below:

- *"Sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty*

The Park's sweeping grandeur and outstanding natural beauty observed across a variety of harmoniously connected landscapes, including marvellous gorges and waterfalls, classic karst geology with caves and sink holes, contrasting glacial landforms such as cliffs and broad valleys carved from old red sandstone and prominent hilltops with extensive views in all directions. A landscape that provides a sense of time depth and timelessness.

- *Contrasting patterns, colours and textures*

A working, living "patchwork" of contrasting patterns, colours and textures comprising well-maintained farmed landscapes, open uplands, lakes and meandering rivers, punctuated by small-scale woodlands, country lanes, hedgerows and stone walls and scattered settlements.

- *Rugged, remote and challenging*

In the context of the UK, geographically rugged, remote and challenging landscapes.

- *Intimate sense of community*

An intimate sense of community where small, pastoral towns and villages are comparatively safe, friendly, welcoming and retain a spirit of cooperation.

- *Sense of place and cultural identity*

A sense of place and cultural identity - "Welshness" - characterised by the indigenous Welsh language, religious and spiritual connections, unique customs and events, traditional foods and crafts, relatively unspoilt historic towns and villages, family farms and continued practices of traditional skills developed by local inhabitants to live and earn a living here, such as common land practices and grazing.

- *Enjoyable and accessible*

Enjoyable and accessible countryside with extensive, widespread and varied opportunities to pursue walking, cycling, fishing, water-based activities and other forms of sustainable recreation or relaxation.

- *Sounds, sights, smells and tastes*

A feeling of vitality and wellbeing that comes from enjoying the Park's fresh air, clean water, rural setting, open land and locally produced foods.

- *Sense of discovery*

A sense of discovery where people explore the Park's hidden secrets and stories such as genealogical histories, prehistoric ritual sites, relic medieval rural settlements, early industrial sites, local myths and legends and geological treasures from time immemorial.

- *Peace tranquillity and darkness*

A National Park offering dark night time skies, peace and tranquillity with opportunities for quiet enjoyment, inspiration, relaxation and spiritual renewal.

- *Diversity of wildlife and richness of semi-natural habitats*

Extensive and widespread access to the Park's diversity of wildlife and richness of semi-natural habitats, such as native woodlands, heathland and grassland, natural lakes and riparian habitats, ancient hedgerows, limestone pavement and blanket bogs including those of international and national importance."

- 4.38 The BBNP has been ascribed a **very high** sensitivity. The SQs of the BBNP will be assessed in detail in the ES.

Brecon Beacons National Park Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.39 BBNPA commissioned and published the BBNP Landscape Character Assessment in August 2012. There are 15 LCAs in total, with 12 LCAs located within 26km of the Study Area and those within the Study Area are shown on **Figure 6.16**. The Site is outwith the BBNP, therefore none of the LCAs would experience direct landscape effects as a result of the Proposed Development, therefore the most pertinent LCAs to this assessment are those within 26km that overlap with ZTV which may experience indirect landscape effects. **Figure 6.16** also shows the ZTV to tip. Some LCAs within 26km have no theoretical intervisibility with the Site, therefore these were scoped out as a perceived change as a result of indirect landscape effects from the proposals is highly unlikely. LCAs with greater than 1% intervisibility have been scoped in which resulted in six LCAs for consideration within this report.
- 4.40 Given that the Site is outwith the BBNP, this study specifically focusses on the perceptual and visual characteristics of non-host LCAs. As such, the LCA summaries below focus on sensitivities relating to these characteristics.
- 4.41 **LCA15: Blorengie Hills and Slopes** covers the ridgeline peninsula to the south-east of the BBNP. LCA15 is described as peaceful and timeless, having a “*sense of being rarely visited.*” The moorland ridge juxtaposes with the treed and flower-rich banks. There are panoramic views from the ridge.
- 4.42 The relevant distinctive characteristics are listed below:
- Craggy ridgeline along the west with concave lopes towards the east;
 - Fast-flowing streams;
 - Open moorland at ridge tops, and pastoral farmland and pockets of woodland along the slopes;
 - Irregular fields on valley sides;
 - A well treed landscape (on the slopes);
 - Mosaic of important habitats;
 - Historic features relating to the local industrial past;
 - Lightly-settled landscape;
 - The easily accessible Blorengie plateau with panoramic views; and
 - Contrast between the open moor and the pattern of woodland and paster below.

- 4.43 LCA15 is c. 4.5km to the east of the Site at its closest point, and c. 12.8% of the LCA located within the Study Area overlaps with the ZTV to tip height.
- 4.44 **LCA9: Mynyddoedd LLangatwg and Llangynidr** is located on the southern edge of the BBNP and this LCA stretches between Merthyr Tydfil and Brynmawr. LCA9 is described as an elevated and open plateau moorland with a smooth profile, lack of settlement, prehistoric archaeology, and quarrying legacy. It contains a high-quality mosaic of moorland habitats and provides a seasonally changing backdrop to the surrounding valleys.
- 4.45 Sensitivities of this LCA include the “introduction of incongruous features into the open landscape” and *“inappropriate development (including outside the National Park) which affects skylines and/or views.”*
- 4.46 Forces for changes in the landscape are highlighted within this LCA as follows (underlined for emphasis):
- *“Present: Development pressures beyond the southern boundary of the National Park (e.g. pylon lines); and*
 - *Future: Proposed Developments beyond the National Park boundary including opencast mining, waste sites, road upgrades and wind turbines all potentially affecting the special qualities of the area, particularly in views southwards.”*
- 4.47 LCA9 is 9.5km from the Site at its closest point, and c. 35.6% of the LCA located within the Study Area overlaps with the ZTV to tip height.
- 4.48 **LCA12: Skirrid and Sugar Loaf** is located along the eastern boundary of the BBNP and hosts the Sugar Loaf summit and the Skirrid landscape Cleft which *“are prominent landmarks over a wide area”*. It is located north and forms the setting of Abergavenny. The Skirrid and Sugar Loaf provide popular walking routes and provide long-distance panoramic views across the surrounding landscape. The landscape contains moorland with farmland, woodland and deep flower-rich lanes across lower land.
- 4.49 Sensitivities include *“visually-intrusive development in surrounding areas affecting views”* and *“loss of tranquillity as a result of visible or audible development in surrounding areas”*.
- 4.50 LCA12 is 11.5km from the Site at its closest point, and c. 7.4% of the LCA located within the Study Area overlaps with the ZTV to tip height.
- 4.51 **LCA13: The Black Mountains** containing some of the highest land in the national park, this LCA provides panoramic views from high ground over the surrounding BBNP and out of the park to the north and east. This LCA is located along the eastern boundary of the BBNP and is formed of remote moorlands and pastoral and settled valleys. It is described as a *“rich archaeological landscape.”*

- 4.52 Sensitivities include *“development within this LCA and surrounding areas affecting views, particularly from higher land.”*
- 4.53 Forces for future changes in the landscape are highlighted within this LCA as follows (underlined for emphasis):
- *“Potential loss of the open landscape and smooth horizons as a result of development (e.g. masts/ turbines) or planting of trees; and*
 - *“Development and road schemes (including outside the National Park) affecting views from high land.”*
- 4.54 LCA13 is 15.5km from the Site at its closest point, and 14.7% of the LCA located within the study area overlaps with the ZTV to tip height.
- 4.55 **LCA8: Talybont and Taff Reservoir Valleys** is characterised by reservoirs, steep sided valleys with dark green forests, and upland moorland. The upland moorland provides long views across the reservoirs and forests. The area is popular for recreation.
- 4.56 Sensitivities include *“loss of tranquillity as a result of visually intrusive/ audible developments beyond the National Park boundary.”*
- 4.57 Forces for changes in the landscape are highlighted within this LCA include the following (underlined for emphasis):
- *Future: Development proposals beyond the National Park boundary to the south (including open cast coal extraction, windfarms ... and waste schemes). ”*
- 4.58 LCA8 is 18.4km from the Site at its closest point, and c. 8.8% of the LCA located within the study area overlaps with the ZTV to tip height.
- 4.59 **LCA7: Central Beacons** is located within the centre of the Brecon Beacons and includes Pen y Fan. It is summarised as *“dramatic sandstone crags”* that *“form the setting to the town of Brecon and its surroundings”*. This landscape is described as one of the most iconic and distinctive features of the BBNP. Long distance views in all directions can be gained from high points as the area is contains highest land of the BBNP. It is a popular area for walking routes.
- 4.60 Sensitivities of the LCA include:
- *“Introduction of incongruous features into the landscape which affect the perceptions of tranquillity, remoteness and relative wilderness; and*
 - *Development within or outside the LCA which impacts on views from summits.”*

- 4.61 Forces for changes in the landscape are highlighted within this LCA include the following (underlined for emphasis):
- *“Past and Present: Development in surrounding areas (e.g. roads, built development) affecting views from the LCA and reducing its special qualities of tranquillity and dark night skies; and*
 - *Future: Developments in adjacent LCAs or beyond the National Park boundary which may affect the views and special qualities of this area, including tranquillity and dark night skies.”*
- 4.62 LCA7 is 21.2km from the Site at its closest point, and 26.9% of the LCA located within the study area overlaps with the ZTV to tip height.
- 4.63 In summary, key characteristics referenced in the published BBNP landscape character assessment includes the protection of the important skylines where there are panoramic or long-distance views that are available from higher ground. For example, a key sensitivity of LCA15 is the *“introduction of visually-intrusive features into views”*. Within its management guidance, it is suggested that long views from the LCA should be protected including those southward to land outside the BBNP.
- 4.64 A series of views from trig points and scenic elevated locations within the BBNP, including a view from the Blorenghe has been included within the visual baseline in **Section 5**.

Wye Valley National Landscape

- 4.65 The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan 2021-2026 groups areas of the Wye Valley National Landscape, namely ‘Landscape Management Zones’ (LMZ). There are 16 LMZ prescription set out in the management plan, and these have been informed by LANDMAP as well as National and County Level Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). There are three LMZs that fall within 26km of the Site are as follows:
- LMZ12 Llangovan Foothills;
 - LMZ13 Devauden Escarpment; and
 - LMZ14 Trellech Sandstone Plateau.
- 4.66 Table 2 of the AONB Management Plan sets out the features of each LMZ and where these correlate with the SQs of the National Landscape. LMZs considered relevant to this study are those that overlap with the ZTV, and these LMZs have been extracted and listed **Table EDP 4.6** below along with their respective features which have been cross referenced with the National Landscape SQs.

Table EDP 4.6: LMZ and Special Qualities for Consideration within this Report

LMZ ID	Features and Link to Special Qualities
LMZ12 Llangovan Foothills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large fields with mature hedgelines, hedgerow trees and individual field trees [SQ5, SQ18]; Limited settlement and traditional farmsteads [SQ20]; and Long distance views [SQ11].
LMZ13 Devauden Escapment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prominent and steep escarpment [SQ1]; Substantial woodland cover [SQ2]; Mixed farming and pasture with mature hedges [SQ5]; Scattered settlement and clustered villages [SQ20]; and Long panoramic views to the north and west [SQ11].
LMZ14 Trellech Sandstone Plateau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High hills and ridges with inward looking basin [SQ1]; Flat or gently rolling plateau centred on the settlement Trellech [SQ1]; Large woodland blocks of relict ancient forest and modern conifer plantations eg. Chepstow Park Wood [SQ2]; Mixed arable and pastoral farming [SQ1]; Red soils of Devonian Old Red Sandstone [SQ7]; Strong network of thick hedges, hedge banks, drystone walls and tree lines [SQ5]; Woodlands enclose fields of permanent pasture and enclaves of unimproved and semi-improved grassland [SQ4]; Sparse settlement outside Trellech with large farmsteads and hamlets [SQ20]; Estates with associated parkland [SQ19]; Distinctive settlement pattern related to small fields and common land [SQ4]; Intricate network of narrow winding lanes with remnant stone walls and mature hedges [SQ5, SQ22]; Springs, streams, wetland, marshland and bogs found, most notable at Cleddon bog [SQ3, SQ10]; Distinct sense of place from the relationship of the woodland, pasture and settlement [SQ12]; Evidence of early occupation, Iron Age enclosure of Gaer and medieval village of Trellech [SQ13, SQ14, SQ15]; and Long views and vistas across the Severn and towards the Brecon Beacons from high land [SQ11].

- 4.67 In summary, potential for indirect landscape effects have been identified with respect to the SQs of the Wye Valley given the potential intervisibility between these LMZs and the proposals and therefore the Wye Valley National Landscape has been scoped in for further consideration. The Wye Valley National Landscape has been ascribed a **very high** sensitivity to change overall.

EDP On site Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.68 A review of aerial photography and mapping has been supplemented by field assessment undertaken over the period between February 2021 and March 2022.

- 4.69 Recognising that 'landscape' is a multi-dimensional concept embracing 'what we see', its time-depth and physical attributes, this LVIA reviews and assesses change to landscape character in terms of the physical landscape, the site's visual and sensory character, landscape fabric and habitats, historic landscape character and cultural connections.
- 4.70 **Figure 6.2** illustrates the topographical relief of the Site and wider area. The highest point of the Site forms a plateau around 470m aOD at the northern boundary. South of this, the central plateau of the Site is around 435m aOD. The Site boundaries generally follow the edge of the plateau at the point where landform begins to fall into the steep valleys.
- 4.71 Due to the scale of the Site, EDP has broken it down into Site Character Areas (SCAs) in order to provide a detailed assessment of the Site. These SCAs are shown on **Figure 6.17**.
- 4.72 The main body of the Site is formed of SCA A Grassland Plateau. This SCA is a broad, open landscape with expansive views, at high points the views are in all directions. The landscape pattern is large scale. There is a road which runs through the north-western part of the SCA, however, the road is not busy and creates only a minor detraction to the sense of tranquillity that can be gained in this area. The SCA is mostly common land and there are informal tracks made through the grassland formed by off-road driving and desire lines created by walkers.
- 4.73 The SCA is rural, however, has a level of human influence created by the presence of the road, a bench alongside it, the tracks, and litter and fly tipping which can often be spotted along the roadside.
- 4.74 Beyond the road, the quality of the landscape is generally high with unimproved acid grassland and marshy grassland habitats. It is grazed by sheep.
- 4.75 With the above considerations, SCA A is ascribed a **high** sensitivity, which is largely due to the panoramic views and the sense of tranquillity.
- 4.76 Towards the edge of the plateaux, the landscape gently slopes away and is mostly used as agricultural land. These areas are shown on **Figure 6.17** as SCA B Farmland Slopes. The land is divided into field parcels within SCA B mostly by fences with some defunct hedgerows in the south-east. This landscape is less open than SCA A due to the location along the sloping edge of the plateau and the presence of trees (although somewhat limited). Views out from the Site are open and long facing outwards from the slopes, and the sense of rural tranquillity remains.
- 4.77 The landscape is predominantly improved and semi-improved grassland and hosts livestock.
- 4.78 With the above considerations, SCA B is ascribed a **high** sensitivity, which is largely due to the open views and the sense of tranquillity.

- 4.79 SCA C Plantation forms a small valley amongst the plateau. This area is mostly outwith the Site boundary, but it is surrounded by the Site on all sides. The pinewood plantation has been reduced by managed felling of the woodland over the last year. There is still some tree cover and there is a small lake (Blue Lagoon) at its centre where there had previously been Tirpentwys open cast coal mine. Tracks for access cut through the plantation and a PRow follows along parts of these tracks. The 'Blue Lagoon' is on private land; however, it is known locally and people have been known to use it recreationally without the landowner's permission despite efforts to fence the area off for safety.
- 4.80 The height of the remaining trees in SCA C creates a vertically large-scale landscape and encloses the space around the Blue Lagoon within. There are narrow vistas through the low point of the valley where the 'Blue Lagoon' is located.
- 4.81 As a plantation, this SCA is a changing landscape. Further removal and replanting of stock will change both the physical and experiential features of this landscape. The physical quality of the landscape is reduced by the removal of the plantation in parts. The sense of tranquillity is also reduced during working hours by virtue of the presence of plantation vehicles and the felling of trees.
- 4.82 Overall, the scale and pattern of the landscape is vast and largely homogeneous. Public accessibility is permitted across much of the Site due to common land and rights of way permissions, and small roads are also part of the Site's fabric. Notwithstanding some reduction in the quality of the landscape fabric and some minor detractors as a result of human influence and mis-uses, the large scale and elevated landscape of the Site is considered to have a high value and medium susceptibility to change. Overall, the Site has been ascribed a **high** sensitivity to development. The elevated and panoramic views available from the Site have strong visual and perceptual qualities in the round, and the perceived separation from the settled valleys increases the sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

Section 5

Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Visual Amenity

Introduction

- 5.1 This section identifies those visual receptors that may be able to obtain views to the Site, their distribution, character and sensitivity to change.
- 5.2 Using landform data within a GIS, EDP has prepared a ZTV. The ZTVs (**Figures 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 6.10, 6.20, 6.21**) are generated using surface data only and do not account for other features that may limit the extent of theoretical visibility, such as vegetation and built form. The ZTVs are based on:
- The Site in its current form with no Proposed Development modelled (**Figure 6.6**);
 - The Proposed Development at the maximum tip height parameters of 180m (which set out in detailed at **Chapter 4** of the ES) across the site (**Figure 6.7**); and
 - The Proposed Development at the maximum tip hub parameters of 122m (which set out in detailed at **Chapter 4** of the ES) across the site (**Figure 6.8**).
- 5.3 The 26km study area ZTVs illustrate the theoretical visibility based on the OS Terrain 50m digital terrain model (DTM) data.
- 5.4 For its size, the visual influence of the Site in its current form is relatively limited given the extent of varying topography and built form in the local vicinity. As **Figure 6.7** ZTV to tip demonstrates, the visual influence of the Site naturally increases with the addition of the Proposed Development. The visual assessment process will determine the extent of the increase in visual influence and where the proposals are likely to be visible from.
- 5.5 As part of understanding the visual baseline, numerous ground truthing exercises were carried out and the ZTV was visited by walking and driving (as appropriate) local roads, PRow and other publicly accessible viewpoints.

Representative Viewpoints

- 5.6 The main receptor groups have been identified and described below and are represented by the photoviewpoints (PVPs) presented in **Table EDP 5.1**. Based on fieldwork observations and the findings of the data trawl, these PVPs have been selected to represent the variety of views available from public vantage points towards the Site.
- 5.7 **Figure 6.11** LVIA Photoviewpoint Locations include 30 representative PVPs that have been selected for inclusion in the visual assessment to follow. These PVPs are locations where there are likely to be sensitive visual receptors, including receptors in designated

areas such as the Brecon Beacons National Park (7), Wye Valley National Landscape (1), Country Parks (1) and various other locations including from settlements, scenic viewpoints, PRoW and rural roads. These PVPs form the basis of the visual assessment, the significance of any effect being derived by combining the magnitude of change to the view and the sensitivity of the visual receptor.

- 5.8 The PVP locations are summarised in **Table EDP 5.1**. In keeping with good practice, the proposed PVPs, photomontage and night-time viewpoint locations for the assessment have been consulted on with TCBC, BGCBC, NRW and BBNP and PEDW. The LVIA PVPs are illustrated on **Figure 6.12** LVIA Photoviewpoints.

Table EDP 5.1: Summary of Representative LVIA Photoviewpoints

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance and Direction of View	Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor
Within 2km				
1	View from Mynydd Llanhilleth Common, taken within the site looking north-east to south-east	323272, 202317	0.22km, SE	Common land and PRoW. High sensitivity
2	Tipentwys Cut taken from within the site looking north	324010, 201046	0.69km, NNW	Private land. Low Sensitivity.
3	Public footpath looking south-west towards the site	325142, 202750	0.53km, SW	PRoW. High sensitivity.
4	Public footpath at Llanerch Memorial looking south-west to north-west towards the site	325247, 202410	0.66km, SW	PRoW and memorial. High sensitivity.
5	Blaen-y-cwm Road looking north towards the site	323998, 200272	0.94km, N	Road users. Medium sensitivity.
6	Public Footpath in Pantygasseg to the east of Mountain View looking north-west towards the site	325376, 199908	0.97km, NW	PRoW. High sensitivity.
7	Car park at Big Arch, Abersychan	325972, 203535	1.62km, SW	Other Route with Permitted Access. Medium sensitivity
8	Public footpath to the east of Abertillery looking south towards the site	323152, 204388	1.68km, S	PRoW High sensitivity.
Within 5km				
9	B4246 (Church Road) junction with Heol Waun, Talywain looking south-west towards the site	326160, 203928	2.01km, SW	Residential street within settlement. Low sensitivity.
10	Public footpath to the west of Six Bells looking south-east towards the site	321304, 202965	2.29km, SE	PRoW. High sensitivity.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance and Direction of View	Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor
11	Llanerch Lane in Pen-tywn on the edge of settlement looking north-east towards the site	320970, 200605	2.36km, NE	Minor road. Medium sensitivity.
12	Torfaen Trail and Woodside Road in Trevethin looking west towards the site	328084, 202525	3.34km, W	Promoted route. Medium/High sensitivity.
13	Pen-y-Fan Country Park, Oakdale looking east towards the site	319660, 200948	3.64km, E	Country Park. High sensitivity.
14	Melvin Place /Llewelyn Avenue junction in Croespenmaen looking north-east towards the site	319774, 198520	4.31km, NE	Residential street. Low sensitivity.
15	Coety Mountain summit (Mynydd Farteg Fawr) looking south towards the site	325016, 206883	4.19km, S	Common land. High sensitivity.
16	Lasgarn Lane, south-eastern tail of BBNP looking south-west towards the site	328860, 204146	4.49km, SW	BBNP. Very High Sensitivity.
Within 5km – 15km				
17	View from Sunnyview, Argoed looking north-east towards the site	317703, 199831	5.72km, NE	Residential Street. Low Sensitivity.
18	Blaenavon World Heritage Site looking south-west towards the site	327157, 207767	5.73km, SW	WHS / PRoW. High Sensitivity.
19	Rocking Point, scenic viewpoint looking south-east towards the site	316025, 204244	7.72km, SE	PRoW and Open Access Land. Very High Sensitivity.
20	Cinnabar Drive, Springfield, Pontllanfraith looking north-east towards the site	317014, 196188	7.92km, NE	Residential street. Low sensitivity.
21	Twmbarlwn summit looking north towards the site	324188, 192605	8.14km, N	Scenic viewpoint/ Scheduled Monument. Very High sensitivity.
22	The Bloreng Summit (BBNP) looking south-west towards the site	327002, 211820	9.49km, SW	BBNP. Very High Sensitivity.
23	Cefn y Brithdir near New Tredgar looking east-south-east towards the site	312786, 203873	10.82km, ESE	Promoted route. High sensitivity.
24	Rhymney Valley Ridge Walk west of Risca looking north-east towards the site	318577, 190554	11.46km, NE	Promoted route. High sensitivity.

PVP. No.	Location	Grid Reference	Distance and Direction of View	Reason(s) for Selection and Sensitivity of Receptor
25	Mynydd Llangatwg trig point (BBNP) looking south-east towards the site	320286, 214486	12.16km, SE	BBNP. Very High Sensitivity.
Within 15km – 26km				
26	Sugar Loaf trig point (BBNP) looking south-west towards the site	327305, 218733	16.24km, SW	BBNP. Very High Sensitivity.
27	Mynydd Llangynidr (BBNP) looking south-east towards the site	312231, 214928	15.76km, SW	BBNP. Very High Sensitivity.
28	Cefn yr Ystrad summit, Brecon Beacons looking south-east towards the site	308701, 213740	18.66km, SE	BBNP. Very High Sensitivity.
29	Wye Valley AONB minor road north of Llanishen, looking west towards the site	347114, 203520	22.14km, W	National Landscape. Very High Sensitivity.
30	Craig y Fan Ddu (BBNP) taken from the Beacon Way looking south-east towards the site	305229, 218797	24.51km, SE	BBNP. Very High Sensitivity.

- 5.9 Best practice guidance recommends that photography is captured in clear weather conditions and ideally when trees are not in leaf. The photography was captured between March 2021 and April 2022 before budburst, however, the site work proved challenging on occasion due to changeable weather patterns. Weather challenges combined with distance from site, and remote and/or south-facing PVPs, and/or stark elevational change resulted in some less clear photography (those affected include **PVPs 9, 15, 22** and **26**). Some of the photomontages may therefore not be considered wholly photorealistic as a result of the weather conditions either. For example, when visibility isn't excellent – particularly in very long distanced views – the array appears to stand out as darker as the modelling used to render the proposals does not account for atmospheric conditions such as light rain or haze in the view. The extent of visibility on a clear day is the worst-case scenario and the assessor has moderated PVP assessment where photography is not clear.
- 5.10 Secondly, tree felling occurred around the Blue Lagoon/Tipentwys Cut adjacent to the Site following site work, therefore some photography does not wholly show the current baseline. This is most apparent in close range views (**PVP 2**). Once again, professional judgement has been used to moderate the assessment. The levels of effect reported herein have been predicted the worst-case scenario i.e. on the basis that all trees have been removed from this plantation.

Visual Receptors within 5km

Public Rights of Way, Open Access Land and Country Parks

- 5.11 There are a number of PRoW within the Site itself, with a large portion of the Site also covered by Common Land right of way permissions. Views from these routes and access land within the Site are generally open across the plateau towards the proposed locations of the turbines as illustrated by **PVP 1**, whilst views from within Blaen-y-cwm (**PVP 2**) located centrally within the Site are less open due to topography, namely a steep-sided valley.
- 5.12 Views from the same plateau to the north (**PVP 8**), east (**PVPs 3 and 4**) and south (**PVP 5**) from Common Land and PRoW within the vicinity of the Site would experience similar baseline views to **PVP 1**, with broad rolling landform allowing for clear views towards the Site, which in some instances is filtered by vegetation.
- 5.13 Further south, **PVP 6** provides views from a narrow ridge at Pantygasseg. Land falls away immediately north of this view to the Nant-Ffrwd-oer before it broadly rises again to the plateau which hosts the Site in the middle distance.
- 5.14 From within 5km to the west, views are represented by **PVPs 10 and 11** of which are upon the opposite side of the Abertillery valley and located on valley sides with an aspect facing towards the direction of the Site. **PVP 10** is taken from a public footpath on elevated ground, of which land immediately falls away to the valley bottom containing Abertillery. As land rises steeply on the opposite side of the valley, woodland dominates the hillside which then thins out as it reaches the broad plateau with the Site in the distance. Similarly, at **PVP 11**, land falls away from its location and looks across the valley with the settlements of Brynithel and Llanhilleth, nestled within a wooded valley side context forming the fore and midground view. The Site itself is located in the distance, and the central plateau on site appears on the skyline, with the wooded Blaen-y-cwm also visible.
- 5.15 Whilst not specifically located on a PRoW or area of Open Access Land, **PVP 13** is located within Pen-y-Fan Country Park. Views comprise a generally flat, sloping landscape in the foreground, flanked by mature woodland which serves to filter distanced views in the direction of the Site.
- 5.16 Eastwards, **PVP 7** represents views from a public footpath and NCR 492 at 'Big Arch' at the western edge of Abersychan. These elevated views have limited views towards the Site, with the immediate hill opposite (Byrgwm) screening and containing much of the view in this direction. Further east, **PVP 12** represents elevated views from the Torfaen Trail, which is more elevated in nature than **PVP 7** and provides a clearer view across Snatchwood in the valley below, with land on the west of the valley rising up to the plateau containing the Site. The eastern side of those slopes are well covered in mature woodland; however, this tends to cease once reaching the plateau of the Site. Further north-east still, **PVP 16** represents views from Open Access Land atop Mynydd Garn-wen,

which represents a similar view to that of **PVP 7**, with distant views to rising wooded valley sides to the plateau on site.

- 5.17 Towards the edge of the 5km Study Area to the north, **PVP 15** represents views from a public footpath passing over the Open Access Land of Coety Mountain some 540m aOD in elevation, with open, distant views across its plateau in the direction of the Site in the distance.

Road Users

- 5.18 Major road routes within this 5km distance range are primarily limited to valley bottoms, with very little opportunity for views towards the Site. Major route users are typically of a **low** sensitivity.
- 5.19 Although there are a number of minor roads within this part of the Study Area, only a few routes afford clear views of towards the Site. Receptors using the minor road network are typically considered to be of a **low** sensitivity, or a **medium** sensitivity if the route is particularly rural or scenic.
- 5.20 **PVP 5** provides a representative view from Blaen-y-cwm Road looking northwards towards the Site. This route provides access towards the Site and Blaen-y-cwm from Pantygasseg to the south. The view looks towards the wooded outcrop of which Blaen-y-cwm is contained within and the Site surrounds. As such, parts of the Site are openly visible, whilst others are, in part, screened by mature woodland. Further south, **PVP 6** provides views from a narrow ridge at Pantygasseg. Land falls away immediately north of this view to the Nant-Ffrwd-oer before it broadly rises again to the plateau which hosts the Site in the mid distance.
- 5.21 North-east, views from the local road network are represented by **PVP 9**, taken from B4246 (Church Road) which looks south-west in the direction of the Site. Byrgwm steeply rises up in the view, limiting the potential for long distance views in this direction, however, the plateau containing the Site is not a far distance beyond, with upper parts of the turbines potentially creeping into view.
- 5.22 To the west, **PVP 11** illustrates views from the opposite side of the Abertillery valley and located on valley sides with an aspect facing towards the direction of the Site. The route arcs round the eastern edge of Pen-tywn. From **PVP 11** itself, land falls away from its location and looks across the valley with the settlements of Brynithel and Llanhilleth nestled within a wooded valley side context forming the fore and midground view. The Site itself is located in the distance, of which the plateau in which is located appears on the skyline, with the wooded Blaen-y-cwm also visible. Further south-west, **PVP 14** is taken from a residential road within Croespenmaen. Views down Llewellyn Avenue comprise residential built form in the foreground which decreases in elevation as topography falls from this point, resulting in distant, open views towards the plateau containing the Site on the horizon.

Visual Receptors between 5km – 15km

Public Rights of Way, Open Access Land, Country Parks and Historic Parks and Gardens

- 5.23 To the north, **PVP 22** represents views from Open Access Land at the summit of Bloreng (within the BBNP) with views available in a southern direction towards the Site. These elevated, distant views comprise the broad sloping plateau of the Bloreng in the direction of Blaenavon, with Coety Mountain falling in the mid distance of the view at c. 544m in elevation, obscuring much of the landscape beyond it. Elsewhere to the north within the BBNP, **PVP 25** represents views from a public footpath within Open Access Land at Mynydd Llangatwg, BBNP. Similarly, Coety Mountain obscures distant views in the direction of the Site.
- 5.24 North-east, **PVP 18** is located upon a public footpath and Open Access Land within BILWHS and Eastern Uplands SLA. The view provides elevated, cross valley views in the direction of the Site. Views comprise a wooded foreground with the valley top between Abertillery and Blaenavon horizontally dominating the view in the direction of the Site.
- 5.25 In terms of views from the west, the availability of views is limited by the north-south valleys which dominate the landscape south of the Brecon Beacons and this part of the Study Area. As such, the potential for views in the direction of the Site is limited to elevated valley tops. **PVP 19** is taken from Open Access Land within the Sirhowy Sides SLA and as described, the valley tops between this location and the Site horizontally dominate and screen much of the Site from view.
- 5.26 With regards to views from this distance to the south, **PVP 21** is taken from the summit of Twmbarlwm Open Access Land and looks north towards the direction of the Site. Further south-west, views are illustrated by **PVP 24** taken from the Rhymney Valley Ridge Walk which looks north-east over Cwmfelinfach towards the Mynydd y Lan which obscures views of Abercarn and Cwmcarn, whilst the raised plateau of the Site is visible in the far distance, some c. 15-50m higher in elevation than Mynydd y Lan, albeit views are filtered and broken up by mature woodland between the view and the Site.
- 5.27 There are seven country parks that fall within 5-15km of the Site and the blade tip ZTV, and these are as follows:
- Pen-y-fan Pond, 3.3km;
 - Parc Coertir Bargod, 7.16km;
 - Parc Cwm Darran, 7.6km;
 - Sirhowy Valley, 8.3km;
 - Parc Penallta, 10.3km;

- Brynbach, 11.2km; and
- Clytha Park, 12.8km.

5.28 There are six historic parks and gardens within 15km and the blade tip ZTV, and these are as follows:

- Pontypool Park;
- Brynderwen, Bettwys Newydd;
- Clytha Park;
- Llanarth Court;
- Cefn Lla; and
- Maes Manor Hotel.

5.29 Theoretical views from these receptor groups that fall within the ZTV will be considered further in the visual assessment.

Road users

5.30 Major road routes within this distance range are primarily limited to valley bottoms, with very little opportunity for views towards the Site. Major route users are typically of a **very low** sensitivity.

5.31 Although there are a number of minor roads within this part of the study area, only a few routes afford clear views of towards the Site. Receptors using the minor road network are typically considered to be of a **low** sensitivity, or a **medium** sensitivity if the route is particularly rural or scenic.

5.32 **PVP 20** represents views from a residential street within Pontllanfraith or which there are filtered views in the direction of the Site. A few existing wind turbines are already visible within the baseline view at closer proximity just north of Blackwood.

Visual Receptors between 15k – 26km

5.33 Between 15km and 26km, opportunity and availability of views towards the Site become far more limited due to a combination of mature vegetation, built form and undulating topography. The focus of the detailed study will be on visual receptors within 15km of the Site. Visual receptors with **very high** sensitivity, such as users of the BBNP and the Wye Valley National Landscape which both extend beyond the detailed study area will also be assessed in **Chapter 6** of the ES.

Public Rights of Way and Open Access Land

- 5.34 In terms of availability of views from these receptor groups to south of the Site, due to the gradual decrease in topographic elevation in this direction towards the Seven Estuary, the potential for views towards the Site becomes extremely limited due to distance, topographic variations, built form and mature vegetation within the layers of the landscape. This is further illustrated by the hub height ZTV (**Figure 6.8**) which indicates very limited potential visibility in this direction.
- 5.35 To the north and north-west, the elevated ground of the BBNP forms much of the Study Area between 15km – 26km, of which the BBNP hosts a vast network of PRoW and Open Access Land. **PVPs 26, 27, 28** and **30** provide representative views from these locations.
- 5.36 **PVP 28** is taken from Open Access Land at the summit of Cefn yr Ystrad within the BBNP and looks south-east towards the Site, however, a combination of distance, topography and mature vegetation screens visibility with the Site itself. A similar situation is represented by **PVPs 26, 27, 28** and **30** (**PVP 30** is also taken from the Beacons Way Promoted Route), again all similarly located from Open Access Land with BBNP looking in a south or south-east direction towards the Site.
- 5.37 To the east, **PVP 29** represents distant views from the western edge of the Wye Valley National Landscape, located on a minor road and public footpath. Views are distant and limited due to a combination of mature vegetation, distance and undulating topography.

Road users

- 5.38 As mentioned above, some distance to the east, **PVP 29** represents views from a minor road at the western edge of the Wye Valley National Landscape. Views are distant and extremely limited due to a combination of mature vegetation, distance and undulating topography.

Residential Dwellings, Groups and Settlements

Dwellings and groups within 2km of the Site

- 5.39 A separate RVAA has been undertaken by EDP and is contained at **Appendix 6K**. The RVAA considers residential receptors within 2km of the Site where there is likely to be the highest magnitude of change (and effects) upon views from residential dwellings. The locations of these receptors are illustrated on **Figure 6.22** and are summarised below:

- Six Bells;
- Talywain;
- Abersychan;

- Pentwyn;
- Pontnewydd;
- Pantegasseg;
- Llanhilleth;
- Brynithel; and
- St Illtyd.

Settlements (between 2 – 15km)

- 5.40 Within the 26km Study Area, settlement is highly varied, being of different sizes and differing levels of population density. Cardiff and Newport fall within the far southern extent of the Study Area, forming the largest urban centres. In addition, there are also a number of towns across the north, south and west of the Study Area, generally aligning with the South Wales ‘Valleys’. To the east of the Site, population and settlement density is far less, with settlement overall far more scattered and mainly comprising small villages.
- 5.41 In order to focus on potentially significant effects, settlements from which there is no theoretical visibility are not considered further in this assessment. Furthermore, settlements with limited theoretical visibility; longer distance views i.e., beyond 15km from the Proposed Development; or where views of the surrounding landscape (including the Site) are not important to setting, and where it is unlikely that significant effects could occur, are not considered further in the assessment.
- 5.42 The settlement pattern found across the broad study area is one that is common across much of the South Wales ‘Valleys’ area. The dense, periodic settlement pattern tends to fall within the valley bottoms or lower valley sides as with the Ebbw Fach Valley and Afon Lwyd Valley discussed above. A number of valley floor urban areas merge, forming a continuous amalgamation of settlement extending a number of kilometres along the valley and/or valley sides.
- 5.43 Settlements beyond the 2km RVAA study area and up to 15km, which overlap with the ZTV to tip height (**Figure 6.20**) include the following:
- Settlements between 2 – 5km:
 - Abersychan;
 - Pen-tywn/Trinant;
 - Pontypool;
 - Crumlin;

- Swffryd;
- Newbridge;
- Oakdale; and
- Abertillery.
- Settlements between 5 – 10km:
 - New Inn;
 - Penpedairheol;
 - Blaina;
 - Nantyglo;
 - Manmoel;
 - Markham;
 - Bargoed;
 - Blackwood;
 - Pontllanfraith;
 - Maesycwmmmer;
 - Tir-y-berth; and
 - Croesycelliog.
- Settlements between 10 – 15km:
 - Ystrad Mynach;
 - Nelson;
 - Hengoed and Cefn Hengoed;
 - Gelligaer and Penybryn;
 - Tredegar;
 - Beaufort;

- Brynmawr;
- Bettws Newydd;
- Gwehelog;
- Llantrisant;
- Tredunnock;
- Llandegveth;
- Roughton;
- Llanhennock;
- Caerleon;
- Ponthir; and
- Usk.

Proposed Photomontage Selection

- 5.44 All of the representative PVPs which have been selected for photomontage production including night-time views have been agreed through consultation. These locations are indicated by blue markers on **Figure 6.11: LVIA Photoviewpoint Locations**. These locations have been selected based on the following criteria:
- Coverage of views from north, south, east and west towards the Site;
 - Coverage of a range of receptors, e.g. walkers on PRow, road users, residential areas;
 - Coverage of identified sensitive receptors, e.g. viewers within country parks, conservation areas, National Parks, National Landscapes and World Heritage Sites; and
 - Suitable night-time views within 2-3km of the Site with the occasional reference to more long distance views from within BBNP (e.g. Blorengel).
- 5.45 In addition to the wireline images, a total of seven PVP locations have been selected for fully rendered photomontages which have been agreed through consultation with TCBC, BBNP and NRW. These are indicated on **Figure 6.11 Photoviewpoint Locations** with pink markers and include:

- **PVP 1:** Public Footpath in Mynydd Common in Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James SLA;
- **PVP 3:** Public Footpath to the east in Western Uplands SLA;
- **PVP 4:** Llanerch Memorial;
- **PVP 5:** Blaen-y-cwm Road looking north;
- **PVP 6:** Public Footpath in Pantygasseg;
- **PVP 7:** Car Park at Big Arch. Abersychan; and
- **PVP 8:** Public Footpath east of Abertillery.

5.46 The night-time baseline is discussed in the next section.

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Section 6

Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Night-time Visual Amenity

- 6.1 As part of the overall suite of documents submitted to support the DNS application, EDP has prepared an ES Chapter and associated appendices, detailing likely effects on both day-time and night-time landscape and visual receptors. The purpose of the night-time assessment is to also give further consideration to the likely effects on the landscape setting to the BBNP.
- 6.2 As the Mynydd Llanhilleth wind turbines proposed are greater than 150m in height (to blade tip), and in accordance with the current Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Policy Statement on the lighting of onshore wind turbines⁵ (2017), the wind turbines will require obstacle avoidance lighting.

Consultation

- 6.3 During the scoping undertaken as part of the DNS process, four PVPs were scoped into the baseline night-time study. The location of these is illustrated on **Figure 6.11**.

Approach and Methodology

- 6.4 The Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3) recognises that night-time views may be a consideration, stating that "*it may be important to carry out night-time 'darkness' surveys of the existing conditions in order to assess the potential effects of lighting*" (para 6.12). However, it does not provide a specific methodology for doing so. Reference is made to preparation of 3D models and "quantitative assessment of lighting levels", with inputs from lighting engineers. At present, the level of lighting detail provided is sufficient to inform the level of detail required for this outline application submission, with further details to follow during the detailed design stages. No lighting illumination model has been prepared and therefore the assessment is based on the professional judgement of the Chartered Landscape Architects undertaking the LVIA.
- 6.5 In the absence of specific published guidelines for night-time LVIA, the methodology used is a reflection of the day-time approach, EDP's own experience of night-time assessment, and review of relevant documents including 'Tranquillity and Place – Dark Skies'⁶ prepared by NRW for example.
- 6.6 In addition, the BBNP is given protection through a dark skies designation, which is awarded by the International Dark Skies Association.

⁵ https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/DAP01062017_LightingWindTurbinesOnshoreAbove150mAGL.pdf

⁶ <https://luc.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/a76b00da19dc4d3d8ef19224db7a3184/data>

- 6.7 Levels of existing light sources in the landscape across Wales has been prepared by NRW, and the mapping available online⁷ covers the Site and Site context. In order to categorise zones of darkness within the Site and its existing context NRW's 'Dark Skies and Light Pollution in Wales' map has been employed. Eight types of brightness levels are presented in NRW's mapping as illustrated in **Image EDP 6.1**.

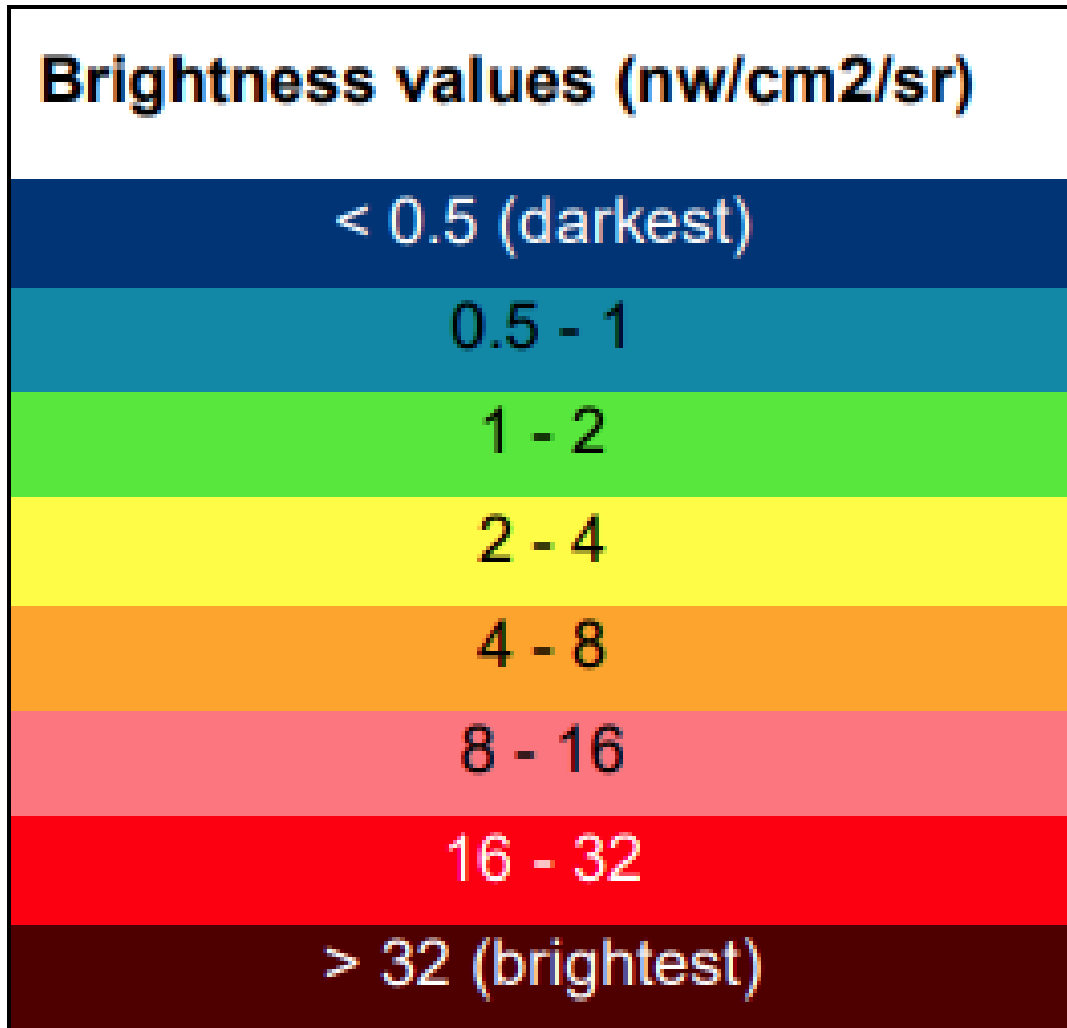


Image EDP 6.1: NRW's Brightness Level Banding as Extracted from 'Dark Skies and Light Pollution in Wales' Map.

Classification of Zones of Darkness

- 6.8 EDP has condensed and classified the data to represent four zones (**See Figure 6.5**) in line with Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPREs) 'England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies' map which are listed below:
- Dark Sky Core;

⁷ <https://luc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opstdashboard/index.html#/1cd6ba8a1d7d4a62aff635cfcbaf4aec>

- Rural Darkness and Buffer;
- Transition; and
- Urban.

- 6.9 Dark Sky Core Zones – The condition of the night sky within the core are generally considered the best within England with clear views of the night's sky with minimal light pollution.
- 6.10 Rural Darkness and Buffer Zones – still identified as a 'dark sky' these areas may not be connected to the main core but still have clear views of the night's sky.
- 6.11 Transition Zones – This zone lies between dark zones and the urban environment. Conditions in this zone are variable with skies appearing brighter.
- 6.12 Urban Zones– Urban areas have high ambient brightness, affected by light pollution from infrastructure, roads, residential and commercial sources.

Representative Night-time Photoviewpoints

- 6.13 Four of the representative PVP locations (**PVPs 6, 11, 12 and 22**) have been selected to capture baseline light during dark hours. These locations are indicated by black markers on **Figure 6.11**, with the baseline imagery illustrated in **Figure 6.12**. These locations have been selected based on the coverage of views from the north, south, east and west towards the Site and the majority are taken where receptors are likely to be at night (roads, settlements and dwellings). With regard to users of PRoW, it is likely that the majority of receptors are no longer active on these routes after dark particularly away from urban areas and light sources which provide a sense of security.
- 6.14 Views were recorded three-five hours after sunset in order to illustrate the Site's context after dark. These timings are considered to be a reasonable timeframe in which most residents are active within their homes and therefore, the photographs present are considered to be an appropriate baseline context.

Night-time Visual Baseline

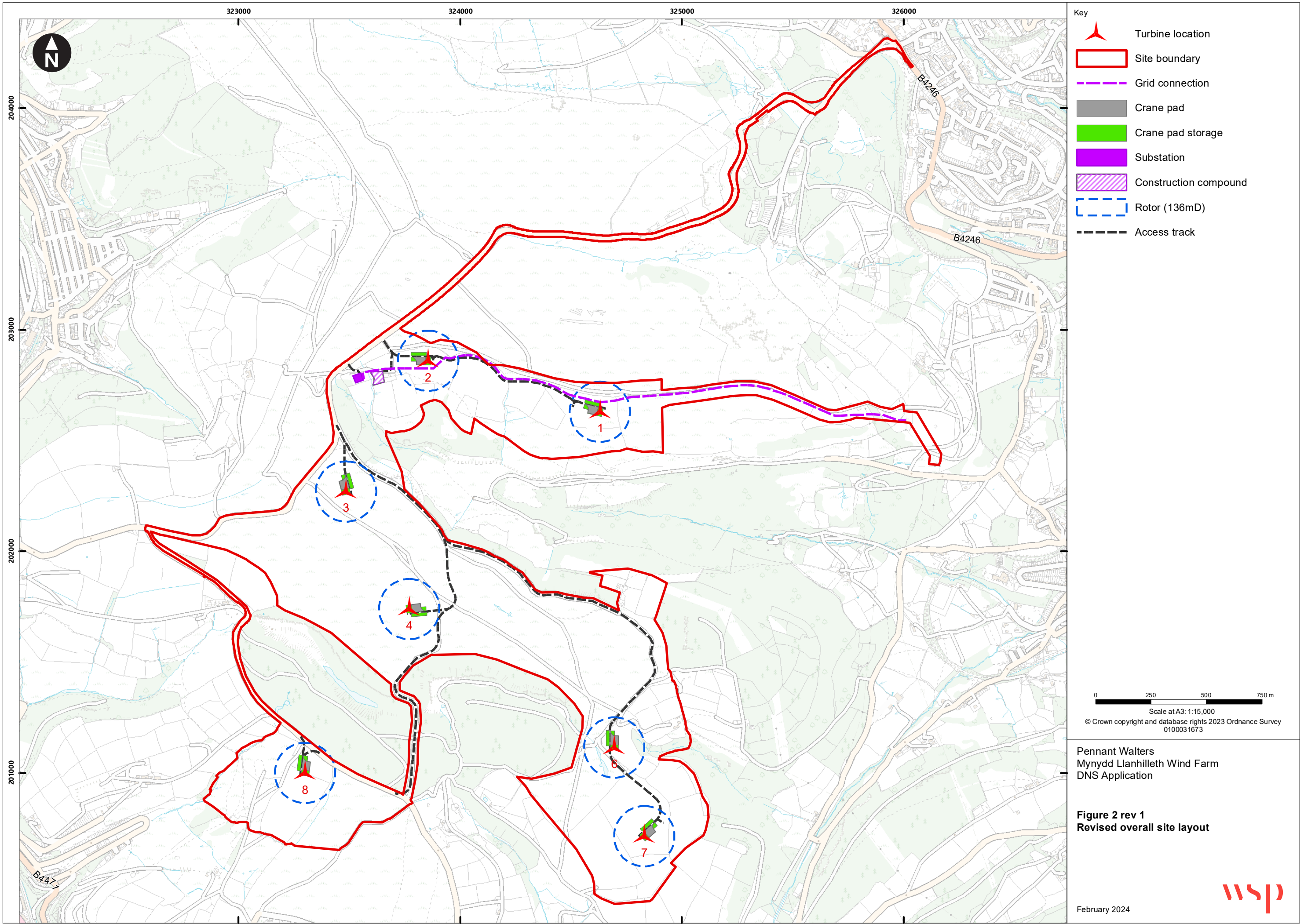
- 6.15 **Figure 6.5** identifies the Site's spatial parameters and the existing levels of light pollution across the Site and surrounding context. The Site itself is mostly within 'Intrinsic Rural Darkness and Buffer' zone with a surrounding influence of the 'Transition' zone which almost entirely surrounds the Site. Nearby settlements of Blackwood, Cwmbran and Abertillery also closely provide a surrounding influence of 'Urban' zone lighting.
- 6.16 Views from the elevated location of Pantygasseg are represented by **PVP 6**, of which has a well-lit foreground provided by nearby street lighting. However, lighting here is very localised, with darker landscape located a short distance north of the Site. The hills on

which the Site is located are unlit, with no visible light sources from dwellings or other structures, whilst glow appears in the backdrop, likely as a result of light sources from settlements to the north of the Site.

- 6.17 **PVP 11** provides well-lit views of the settlement of Pen-twyn of which linear lighting across streets across the valley bottom and sides provide a bright focal point within the view. There are no light sources further upslope in the direction of the Site, whilst the hills themselves appear as a silhouette against a backdrop of light glow, likely from valley settlements to the east.
- 6.18 Views from **PVP 12** at night are from Trevethin Settlement and include street lighting, lighting from housing and commercial areas which exhibit a glow across the view. The hills beyond are lit up as a light silhouette, likely from light sources from the valley settlement of Abertillery beyond. There are very few light sources upon the valley side themselves, with a hand full of dwellings providing limited light source.
- 6.19 Night-time views from the BBNP have been considered, with **PVP 22**, The Blorengie located c. 9.5km from the Site. The centre of the view comprises a dark skyline with no static or mobile lights sources whilst night glow and light sources from valley settlement such as Abersychan.
- 6.20 An initial investigation into assessing baseline levels of light pollution within the Site and its surrounding context has identified the Site as falling within the 'Intrinsic Rural Darkness Buffer' and 'Transitional' Zones.
- 6.21 The baseline assessment has shown that the Site already has some light pollution as a result of settlements to the north, east, south and west. The night-time views be assessed in **Appendix 6K** of the ES.

Annex EDP 1.0
Layout Plan
(Ref. 807095-WOOD-FG-OP-00017_P02)

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Annex EDP 2.0

Relevant Extracts from Local Policy

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Torfaen County Borough Council (TCBC)

Torfaen County Borough Council Local Development Plan (to 2021)

the allocations provide a range of site sizes in all areas, providing the potential to accommodate both large and small developments throughout Torfaen. A detailed table showing the breakdown of all employment provision identified is contained at Appendix 7.

- 5.6.4 The Policy, whilst allocating new land, seeks to protect existing functioning employment land to ensure employment opportunities can be realised on existing sites. Regeneration of existing employment sites to improve, intensify and diversify the County Borough's economy, allows new employment opportunities to be realised in key locations particularly the town centres. Whilst opportunities to enhance town centre based employment will be supported, proposals which would undermine the retail function of the town centre in question will be resisted.

Supporting LDP Objectives: 1, 2 & 6

S7 Conservation of the Natural and Historic Environment
Development proposals should seek to ensure the conservation and enhancement of the Natural, Built & Historic Environment of Torfaen, in particular:

- a) Biodiversity resources;
- b) Geodiversity resources;
- c) Water environment;
- d) Landscape setting;
- e) Character of the built environment; and
- f) Historic assets.

Policy Justification

Natural Environment

- 5.7.1 The natural and built environment of Torfaen is a major asset and is important to the character of the County Borough and contributes to people's quality of life. This Policy is designed to promote the protection and enhancement of these assets and ensure that they are managed sensitively. The level of protection afforded to these assets will reflect if they are national, local, statutory or non statutory designations in line with national policy.
- 5.7.2 Torfaen's biodiversity resources are diverse and cover national & locally designated sites, habitats, species and features to the overall biodiversity network. Statutory designated sites (including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's)) are protected under separate legislation and national policy.

C2 Special Landscape Areas (SLA's)
Special Landscape Areas are identified at the following locations: -

C2/1 - Llandegfedd Reservoir;

C2/2 - South Eastern Lowlands;

C2/3 - Southern Lowlands;

C2/4 - South West Uplands;

C2/5 - Blaenavon Heritage Landscape;

C2/6 - Eastern Uplands;

C2/7 - Afon Lwyd Valley; and

✳️ C2/8 - Western Uplands.

In order to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of the defined SLA's development proposals that could impact on these designations will be expected to conform to high standards of design and environmental protection which is appropriate to the LANDMAP character of the area.

Policy Justification

8.44.1 Utilising the national LANDMAP information system SLA's have been identified within Torfaen. They have been designated to protect areas that are considered to be important to the overall landscape, history, culture, biodiversity and geology of the County Borough. Areas identified have particular characteristics that combined reflect special areas that are intrinsic to the overall character of Torfaen's environment.

8.44.2 The areas identified will be protected from any development that would harm the individual and distinctive features of the SLA's. The policy is not designed to preclude development, although applicants will need to demonstrate that any development proposal will not have an adverse impact on the unique characteristics associated with the specific SLA. Design and Access Statements will be required to address the unique aspects of the Special Landscape Areas identified by the Designation of Special Landscape Area Study (2011) and LANDMAP.

8.44.3 Applications for development within an identified SLA will need to consider the LANDMAP aspect areas and identify how the development proposal affects the aspects area. A detailed description of the identification process and allocations is contained in the separate 'Designation of SLA Study 2011'.

Supporting LDP Objectives: 7 & 12

European designated sites outside the County Borough, including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) and candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs), are also protected under separate legislation and national policy. Policy BW1 should also be referred to in the assessment of proposals on European designated sites.

5.7.3 Proposals affecting local (non-statutory) ecological and biodiversity resources (including the network of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and Local Nature Reserves) will be assessed against Policies BW1 and BG1.

5.7.4 Biodiversity networks serve an important function in supporting the long term sustainability of our core biodiversity resources such as SACs and SSSIs through connectivity and stepping stone habitats for the movement of wildlife through the County Borough and genetic exchange. All biodiversity resources that contribute to the overall network should be protected from inappropriate development. Core ecological corridors in the network include the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal, Afon Lwyd River and the National Cycle Route 49/492. The LDP also recognises the importance that green infrastructure can make to the overall biodiversity network. Policy S3 promotes the use of green infrastructure in building design, and also through measures such as SUDS which are important for reducing surface water run off and flood risk, but also serve an important function as wildlife habitats. Trees and hedgerows also form part of the biodiversity network.

Proposals affecting such resources will be assessed against Policy BW1.

5.7.5 Geodiversity refers to the variety of soils, rocks, fossils, minerals and natural processes that make up the Earth's physical landscape and structure. There are no designated geological sites in Torfaen (either an SSSI or Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS)). However, RIGS may be identified in Torfaen in the near future. Proposals affecting geodiversity assets will be assessed against Policy BG1.

5.7.6 This Policy promotes the protection of the quality and quantity of controlled waters within the County Borough, including the surface and groundwater resource. Proposed development should take account of such features and whilst change is inevitable, it must be controlled appropriately to ensure the water resource or species or habitats that depend on it are not detrimentally affected. Policy BW1 (criterion B vi & vii) provides more detailed considerations and should be referred to when considering development proposals affecting the water environment.

5.7.7 Areas of the County Borough designated as Special Landscape Areas (SLA's) for their high landscape value, will be afforded protection to ensure that their character and setting is not harmed by inappropriate development proposals. Development proposals within a SLA will be assessed against Policy C2.

- 5.7.8 Green Wedges have been identified to protect the character and open nature of these designated areas, their countryside setting and to prevent coalescence between settlements. The spread of the urban area into the countryside could result in the urbanisation of rural areas, loss of important green space and could have a detrimental effect upon agriculture, the landscape and amenity value of land. Green Wedges also form an important connective feature within the biodiversity network. A further important reason for their designation is to protect the individual identity of settlements. Development proposals within a Green Wedge will be assessed against Policy C1.
- 5.7.9 Areas of open countryside make an important contribution to the landscape setting of Torfaen and inappropriate development should be resisted where it would cause harm to the Countryside setting as outlined in Policy S1. The County Borough has a vast array of open space both within and outside the Urban Boundary, which contributes to people's enjoyment of the environment. It is important that the accessibility of settlements to green space, open spaces, areas of biodiversity and the countryside is promoted, which will be important in contributing to people's health and well being and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation and leisure. The LDP identifies Important Urban Open Spaces to be protected in the County Borough in Policy CF4.
- 5.7.10 New development will have a cumulative impact on the landscape character especially where urban areas are extended. Landscape and layout considerations to reduce visual impacts of new developments should inform development proposals. The LDP has sought to balance the need for development, with the need to protect and enhance the landscape. Designation of Special Landscape Areas, Green Wedges and a network of Important Urban Open Spaces facilitate this aim.
- 5.7.11 Minerals underlie the majority of the County Borough. Therefore, the Council aims to balance the need to conserve the distinctive features and characteristics of the natural heritage with the need to safeguard nationally important mineral resources. Proposals for mineral workings are subject to national policy tests, as set out in Minerals Planning Policy Wales (MPPW), Minerals Technical Advice Note 1 (MTAN1) on Aggregates and Minerals Technical Advice Note 2 (MTAN2) on Coal. The implications of such proposals will also need to be considered in respect of the distinctive features and characteristics of the natural heritage identified within the Plan.

Built and Historic Environment

- 5.7.12 For the purposes of criterion (e), the character of the built environment includes local distinctiveness and setting of settlements and townscape character. The impacts of proposed development on this character will be assessed under Policy S4 and BW1.
- 5.7.13 The protection of the character of the BILWHS, from both inappropriate development and design is a key aim of the LDP. The Council does not seek to restrict development but promote development proposals that can contribute to the continued protection and enhancement of this important resource. Development proposals within the BILWHS will be assessed against national policy as contained in PPW (Paragraphs 6.4.8 & 6.5.24 - 5th Edition) and Policy HE2.
- 5.7.14 Other aspects of the Historic Environment should be preserved (as outlined in criterion (f)) where possible, whilst allowing sympathetic development to be brought forward. This includes the promotion of Heritage tourism which is promoted through Policy EET6. The heritage assets include the County Borough's Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Historic Parks & Gardens, sites of archaeological interest (including scheduled and unscheduled remains), other historic resources as contained on the Historic Environment Record (HER) and LANDMAP features of importance. These national designations are protected under separate legislation and national

policy. Development proposals affecting buildings of local importance that do not benefit from statutory protection will be assessed against Policy HE1.

- 5.7.15 Whilst recognising the importance of the natural and built heritage of Torfaen within this Policy, such objectives will apply in respect of the Brecon Beacons National Park Area that falls within the TCBC boundary. TCBC recognises its duty under Section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995 and the importance to ensure that development proposals in the TCBC area which are likely to affect the purposes for which the National Park is designated are carefully considered and do not prejudice the continued conservation and enhancement of the National Park in line with PPW para 5.3.6 - 5th Edition.

Supporting LDP Objectives: 2, 7, 10, 12, 14 & 15

being altered or even demolished with little regard for their local importance. Such buildings should be retained and appropriate uses sought to maintain their character. Such buildings will be included on a Local List along with justification for their inclusion. Where development proposals affect such buildings or structures the impact should be assessed as part of a planning application.

- 8.50.2 In assessing development proposals concerning the building, the Council will assess the degree to which the building remains in its original condition, quality of the individual building's architecture and position & influence on the townscape or **landscape**. Consideration will also be given to the affect of other development proposals on the setting and character of the building of local importance. Importantly however, the Council will give due regard to the difference between buildings of local importance and those that are statutorily listed and hence the level of protection they attract. Consideration will also be given to the building's setting. A local list of such buildings will be compiled from visual surveys and engagement with local interest groups and SPG will set out the methodology for such a list.

Supporting LDP Objectives: 7 & 12

HE2 Blaenavon Industrial Landscape World Heritage Site (BILWHS)

Development proposals within, and adjacent to the BILWHS will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: -

- a) The proposal promotes a standard of design in terms of siting, scale, massing and materials, which is sympathetic to and preserves or enhances the character of the local area and settlement form; and
- b) Important views into and within the BILWHS are not adversely affected by the proposals; and
- c) The proposal contributes to ensuring the preservation of the 'Outstanding Universal Value' of the BILWHS designation; and
- d) The proposal would not adversely affect the overall integrity of the BILWHS and its landscape or historic setting.

All development proposals within and adjacent to the World Heritage Site should be informed by the BILWHS Design Guidance and should identify how the proposals are consistent with the principles in this document.

Policy Justification

- 8.51.1 The Blaenavon Industrial Landscape contains extensive remains of early mineral works and processing, as well as the remains of the later commercial production of coal, iron and

steel. These elements together with the town of Blaenavon constitutes one of the best examples in Wales of a valley head industrial community and is considered to form one of the most complete and best surviving historic landscapes of it's kind in the World.

- 8.51.2 In November 2000 the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape was designated as a World Heritage Site, due to its outstanding universal value. In response to the increased development pressures, it is important that the design and scale of new development throughout the BILWHS, its setting and in particular the Blaenavon urban area are carefully considered in order to ensure the continued protection and enhancement of this cultural landscape.
- 8.51.3 New development within the BILWHS and its setting will be required to be sympathetic with the historic and landscape context and should be regarded as an opportunity to reinforce the positive characteristics of the area and remove, resolve / or dilute any negative aspects where possible. Particularly important within the BILWHS are the important views within it that contribute to its character; and development proposals must not be of detriment to these views. Further information on consideration of important views can be found in the BILWHS Design Guide noting there will be other important views that may not addressed in the document.
- 8.51.4 The Policy seeks to protect the character and values (as set out in the BILWHS Management Plan Review) of the BILWHS,



from both inappropriate development and design. This includes ensuring that the principles for which the BILWHS was designated as Outstanding Universal Value are not adversely affected by development proposals. The Policy does not seek to restrict development but rather ensure development proposals identify how they can contribute to the continued protection and enhancement of this important resource, through sympathetic design, which reflects the principles in the BILWHS Design Guidance SPG. This can be achieved by ensuring that change is managed in a way that sustains and where appropriate enhances the historic character of the built environment, without overly constraining or inhibiting development.

- 8.51.5 The Forgotten Landscapes Project will help conserve and restore the built and natural heritage features that are integral to the historic character of the landscape and natural features around Blaenavon. The Forgotten Landscapes Partnership has recognised the need for the creation of a buffer zone around the BILWHS and has made these recommendations to the Blaenavon Partnership. The Blaenavon Partnership has accepted the recommendations and intends to present its case for a buffer zone to UNESCO for consideration. In the event the buffer zone is adopted it will become a material consideration in future planning applications. It will need to be recognised that if a buffer zone is adopted the Council can only control the use and development of land within the administrative area of Torfaen.

Supporting LDP Objectives: 4, 6, 7 & 12



Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (BGCBC)

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Local Development Plan (adopted 2012) up to 2021

6.63 The countryside makes up much of the land area of Blaenau Gwent and is a positive asset that can strengthen regeneration strategies and maximise tourism opportunities. The countryside can provide an enhanced quality of life and provide benefits to people's health and well-being. This Policy seeks to develop opportunities for Blaenau Gwent to contribute to the Valleys Regional Park which is a network of countryside recreation areas linked by strategic footpaths and cycleways and represents a key opportunity to attract tourists and investment. Activity tourism, for example, mountain biking and walking will be encouraged in such areas. Development proposals that would contribute to the delivery of the Valleys Regional Park, including leisure and tourism development at Parc Bryn Bach, will be considered favourably. As it is important that proposals do not have an unacceptable impact on existing areas of environmental importance any proposals should conform to policies DM14, DM15 and DM16.

6.64 At present 65% of the population in Blaenau Gwent live within 400m of their nearest green space but the Plan aims to increase this to 80%. This will be achieved by creating new open space, enhancing access to existing natural green space, managing existing green space for biodiversity, and removing barriers that prevent current access to natural green space.

6.65 Access to public open space, natural greenspace and recreational facilities is important in promoting public health and wellbeing and enhancing quality of life for both residents and visitors. The Council will therefore seek to protect these land uses to avoid their loss as they represent an important part of the Council's strategy to improve the public health of the resident population.

Relevant Objectives, Development Management Policies, Allocations and Background Papers

- **Objectives:** 7 and 11
- **Development Management Policies:** DM3, DM11, DM12, DM13, DM14, DM15 and DM16
- **Allocations:** MU1, MU2, CF1, TM1 and L1
- **Background Papers:** Leisure, Environment (Updated) and Tourism

SP10 Protection and Enhancement of the Natural Environment

Blaenau Gwent's unique, natural environment and designated landscape will be protected, and, where appropriate, enhanced. This will be achieved through:

- a. Protecting, enhancing and managing Cwm Merddog Woodlands/Coed Ty'n y Gelli and Brynmawr Sections and Mynydd Llangynidr Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- b. Ensuring that development does not have a significant effect on the neighbouring Usk Bat Site, Cwm Clydach Woodlands, Aberbargoed Grasslands, Sugar Loaf Woodlands or the River Usk Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
- c. Ensuring that the locally identified Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species are protected and enhanced;
- d. Protecting those attributes and features which make a significant contribution to the character, quality and amenity of the landscape;
- e. Maintaining and enhancing the Green Infrastructure including creating a network of local wildlife sites and wildlife corridors, links and stepping stones;
- f. Ensuring development seeks to produce a net gain in nature conservation by designing in wildlife, and ensuring any avoidable impacts are appropriately mitigated for; and
- g. Ensuring development proposals do not have an unacceptable adverse impact upon the water environment and contribute to improving water quality where practicable.

6.66 The local natural environment has seen considerable changes over the past 30 years. As the pressures put upon it by heavy industry have subsided, the visual and wildlife qualities that are unique to the area have significantly increased. The LDP Strategy aims to protect and enhance the local **landscape**, biodiversity and geodiversity. This will be achieved through the identification, protection and enhancement of international, European, national and locally important sites as well as habitats and species across the Borough. Proposals which are likely to have a significant effect on international and nationally designated sites will be assessed in accordance with national planning policy. In accordance with the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) development will not be permitted where it adversely affects the integrity of these sites. Blaenau Gwent does not contain any European sites, although several SACs are in close proximity. It does, however, contain 2 SSSIs. Designated **landscapes** include local designations such as Special **Landscape** Areas as well as national designations such as national parks. Relevant authorities have a legal duty under section 62(2) of the Environment Act 1995 to have regard to the purposes for which National Parks are designated. Thus any development within Blaenau Gwent should not have an unacceptable impact on the setting of Brecon Beacons National Park which is in close proximity.

6.67 This Policy aims to protect key recreational and green assets (Green Infrastructure) including ecological networks and **landscape** features that are important for biodiversity. It is important to maintain and enhance ecological networks of natural and semi-natural habitats that have a high degree of connectivity. One way of achieving this will be through the designation of important ecological networks that have been identified as part of the process of designating SINC's and Local Nature Reserves. The identifying, protecting and linking of ecological corridors will assist in enabling wildlife to cope with climate change. Policy DM15 provides further information in support of this Policy.

6.68 The natural environment is diverse and widespread including specific biodiversity protection for areas and habitats and species including national and local designations. It is important that these are protected from inappropriate development but, where the need for the development outweighs the nature conservation importance of the site and it can be demonstrated that the development cannot reasonably be located elsewhere, mitigation and/or compensation will be required to ensure that there is no net loss of biodiversity. Mitigation will be necessary to offset any negative effects and where this is not possible, compensatory provision equivalent in value to that lost as a result of the development will be necessary. Mitigation may mean on-site or off-site mitigation and will be delivered through S106 agreements and planning conditions. However, development will be encouraged to result in a net improvement in terms of biodiversity by taking account of it as part of any development.

6.69 The natural environment also covers water. This Policy promotes the protection and improvement of the quality and quantity of controlled waters within the County Borough, including the surface and groundwater resource. Development will not be allowed if it is demonstrated that there is likely to be adverse impact on the water resources. Policy DM1 provides more detail and should be referred to when considering development proposals affecting the water environment.

Relevant Objectives, Development Management Policies, Allocations and Background Paper

- **Objectives:** 12 and 13
- **Development Management Policies:** DM1, DM14, DM15 and DM16
- **Allocations:** ENV1, ENV2 and ENV3
- **Background Paper:** Environment (Updated)

ENSURING DEVELOPMENT CREATES A NETWORK OF SUSTAINABLE VIBRANT VALLEY COMMUNITIES

Design

DM1 New Development

Development proposals will be permitted provided: -

1. Sustainable Design

- a. Energy efficient design is achieved;
- b. The proposal makes efficient and effective use of resources by employing sustainable building techniques, incorporating energy and water conservation measures, and wherever possible, the use of renewable energy;
- c. Construction waste and pollution is minimised and the proposal incorporates facilities for the segregation, recovery and recycling of waste;
- d. Recycled or sustainable products and resources are used in construction, where practicable;
- e. The proposal reduces surface water run off through minimising an increase in impermeable surfaces and using Sustainable Drainage systems, where appropriate; and
- f. The proposal does not result in a net loss of biodiversity and provides where necessary mitigation and/or compensation measures.

2. Amenity

- a. The development would be compatible with other uses in the locality;
- b. There would be no unacceptable adverse visual impact on townscape or **landscape**;
- c. There would be no unacceptable impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers;

- d. In the case of residential development including extensions and sub-division of dwellings, dwellings must be of appropriate size to provide satisfactory levels of amenity;
- e. There would be no adverse impact upon the water environment or an unacceptable risk to the quality of controlled waters (including groundwater and surface water);
- f. The proposal contributes to improving water quality wherever practicable;
- g. The proposal does not result in airborne emissions which have an unacceptable effect on the health, amenity or natural environment of the surrounding area, taking into account cumulative effects of other proposed or existing sources of air pollution in the vicinity.
- h. There would be no unacceptable risk of harm to health and/or local amenity from unacceptably high levels of noise, vibration, odour or light pollution;
- i. The land is made stable and capable of supporting the development without risk of damage to buildings on the site or adjoining land; and
- j. Practicable and effective measures are taken to treat, contain or control any contamination.

3. Accessibility

- a. The proposal has regard for the safe, effective and efficient use of the transportation network;

7.35 In the case of renewal and windfall applications the range of requirements sought in relation to development proposals will be determined on a case by case basis, taking into account the location and nature of the development and the local infrastructure on which it would impact. Individual Council Departments will elaborate on their requirements as part of the planning application process. The level of provision required will be supported by a robust evidence base according to the capacity of existing facilities and the priorities of the relevant Department at any given time and do not therefore form part of the LDP.

7.36 In all cases, when a development proposal that would otherwise be refused would be made acceptable by securing the necessary infrastructure improvements via a planning obligation, planning permission will only be granted once the planning obligation has been signed. If such an agreement cannot be achieved the development proposal will be refused.

7.37 Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Planning Obligations is to be updated to support the relevant LDP policies, provide a robust evidence base in support of those policies and elaborate on specific procedural requirements. The SPG should therefore be consulted in respect of all development proposals that are likely to trigger a requirement for the provision of new or improved infrastructure.

Relevant Objectives, Strategic Policies and Allocations

- **Objectives:** 3, 7, 9 and 10
- **Strategic Policies:** SP1, SP2, SP4, SP8, SP9, SP11 and SP12
- **Allocations:** MU1, MU2, MU3, AA1, R1, H1, HC1, EMP1, TM1, M4 and W1

Renewable Energy

DM4 Low and Zero Carbon Energy

The Council will encourage major development proposals to incorporate schemes which generate energy from renewable and low/zero carbon technologies. These technologies include onshore wind; landfill gas; energy crops; energy from waste; anaerobic digestion; sewage gas; hydropower; biomass; combined heat and power; and solar.

These technologies will be permitted provided that:

- a. Appropriate monitoring and investigation can demonstrate that the development will not have any unacceptable adverse impact on nature conservation and the character and appearance of the **landscape**;
- b. Appropriate arrangements have been made for the preservation and/or recording of features of local archaeological, architectural or historic interest;
- c. They can be safely accessed to permit regular maintenance without an unacceptable adverse impact to the environment or the public rights of way network;
- d. They will not have an unacceptable adverse impact on local amenity by reason of noise emission, visual dominance, shadow flicker, reflected light, the emission of smoke, fumes, harmful gases, dust, nor otherwise cause pollution to the local environment;
- e. They will not lead to electromagnetic disturbance to existing transmitting and receiving systems (which includes navigation and emergency services), thereby prejudicing public safety;

development outweighs the nature conservation importance of the site then the Council will seek to secure reasonable measures to offset any impacts or loss of habitat features or species present on a site that may occur as a result of the development. Such measures will be agreed prior to commencement of development and will be secured through appropriate planning conditions and/or planning obligations. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance on Biodiversity and Geodiversity, includes further information and guidance to support this Policy.

Relevant Objective, Strategic Policy and Allocations

- **Objective:** 13
- **Strategic Policy:** SP10
- **Allocations:** MU1, MU2, MU3, AA1, R1, H1, HC1, GT1, T5, T6, EMP1, ED1, CF1, TM1, L1, ENV2, ENV3, ENV4, ENV5

DM15 Protection and Enhancement of the Green Infrastructure

Development proposals will be permitted provided:

1. There is no loss in connectivity within the Strategic Green Infrastructure network which comprises:
 - a. River Corridors
 - b. Special Landscape Areas
2. Where appropriate, they facilitate connections to Strategic and Local Green Infrastructure; and
3. Where appropriate, they create natural open space and features to enhance linkages between the Green Infrastructure.

7.79 Green Infrastructure (GI) is a network of connected, accessible, multi-functional sites (including parks, woodland, informal open spaces, and nature reserves) as well as linkages (such as river corridors and wildlife corridors) that can bring about multiple social, health, economic and environmental benefits to the area. The sites are multi-functional in that apart from their ecological value they can be used for various purposes, for example, leisure activities and promoting tourism with associated benefits in terms of health and the economy.

7.80 The Strategic GI in Blaenau Gwent (see Appendix 1 in Environment Background Paper) consists of the mountain ridges and river corridors. The mountain ridges are designated as Special Landscape Areas (SLA), and protected under Policy ENV2 whilst the river corridors are designated as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and are afforded protection under Policy ENV3. Below this strategic level there is Local GI such as cycle paths, informal open space, parks, other SINCs and nature reserves.

7.81 The main purpose of this Policy is to ensure that development does not lead to loss of connectivity between the sites forming the Strategic Green Infrastructure because although these individual sites are important in their own right it is the resulting connectedness that brings considerable added value and enables a response to climate change.

7.82 Another aim of this Policy is to increase connections to Strategic and Local GI to help maximise the benefits that the GI generates. The community cycle network and SINCs forms the basis of linkages between the Local and Strategic GI. An example of how connections within the Local GI are being improved is the Ebbw Fach Trail which links together 13 community green spaces that provide a variety of amenities from Beaufort to Llanhilleth, a total distance of almost 16 kilometres. Development proposals should, where possible, facilitate connections between the Local GI and the Strategic GI. A report prepared by consultants highlighted that at present 65% of the population in Blaenau Gwent live within 400m of their nearest green space but the Plan aims to increase this to 80%.

7.83 The Green Infrastructure will also be enhanced by creating new open space and natural features as part of new development or through developer contributions. This whole approach integrates biodiversity interests, provides a response to climate change and enables more sustainable and healthy lifestyles by incorporating interests of cyclists and walkers. This infrastructure will be developed and enhanced in accordance with the aims and objectives of the Valleys Regional Park (VRP).

Relevant Objective, Strategic Policy and Allocations

- **Objective:** 13
- **Strategic Policy:** SP10
- **Allocations:** MU1, MU2, H1, HC1, T1, T5, T6, EMP1, TM1 and ENV2

DM16 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerow Protection

Development proposals will be permitted provided there would not be unacceptable harm to trees, woodlands and hedgerows that have natural heritage value or contribute to the character or amenity of a particular locality.

7.84 Trees, woodlands and hedgerows are a key part of the landscape, making a positive contribution to both the natural and built environment. In order to retain trees, woodlands and hedgerows of natural heritage and conservation value and minimise any adverse effects of development, applicants are required to assess all trees and woodlands, on and adjoining their site, using the recommendations of the current British Standard 5837 for trees in relation to construction in conjunction with the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance 'Trees and

Development: A Guide to Incorporating Trees, Woodlands & Hedgerows into Development Proposals'. The assessments should be used to inform the design, and will be used by the Council in fulfilling its statutory obligations in respect of protecting trees and woodlands. In considering hedgerows, the Council will have regard to their landscape, historic and nature conservation value, as well as their function as boundaries.

7.85 A number of trees, woodlands and hedgerows are protected through Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's), Conservation Area Status and the Hedgerow Regulations. In such instances there is national policy and guidance, which protects them. This policy relates to trees, woodlands and hedgerows which are a key part of the landscape and make a positive contribution to both the natural and built environment but are not protected through Acts or Regulations.

Relevant Objective, Strategic Policy and Allocations

- **Objective:** 13
- **Strategic Policy:** SP10
- **Allocations:** MU1, MU2, MU3, H1, HC1, GT1, T5, T6, EMP1, TM1, L1, ENV2, ENV3, ENV4 and ENV5

Built Environment

DM17 Buildings and Structures of Local Importance

Development proposals affecting buildings or structures which make an important contribution to the character and/or interest of the local area will only be permitted where:-

- a. The building's distinctive appearance, architectural integrity and its setting would not be significantly adversely affected and/or;
- b. The benefits of the proposal would outweigh any adverse effects.

Relevant Objectives, Strategic Policy and Development Management Policies

- **Objectives:** 11 and 12
- **Strategic Policy:** SP9
- **Development Management Policies:** DM12, DM14, DM15 and DM16

Environment

ENV1 Green Wedges

Green Wedges have been identified at the following locations in order to prevent coalescence between settlements:

1. Beaufort and Brynmawr
2. Tredegar and Ebbw Vale

8.70 The extent of these areas is shown on the LDP Proposals Map and within these areas development that prejudices the open nature of the land will not be permitted.

8.71 The need to define and maintain open spaces between and within urban areas and settlements to prevent coalescence is considered important for the County Borough to protect the integrity of the built and natural environment.

8.72 Although other Policies in the Plan are aimed at restricting development in the countryside, it is considered necessary to provide additional protection to areas of important and vulnerable open land by restricting development on the urban fringe and between settlements. Each of the Green Wedges has been identified following consideration of factors such as development pressure, urban form and the potential for eventual coalescence of settlements.

Relevant Objective and Strategic Policy

- **Objective:** 13
- **Strategic Policy:** SP10

ENV2 Special Landscape Areas

Special Landscape Areas are identified and will be protected at the following locations:

1. St Illtyd Plateau and Ebbw Eastern Sides
2. Eastern Ridge and Mynydd James
3. Cwm Tyleri and Cwm Celyn
4. Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn and Cefn yr Arail
5. Mynydd Bedwellty, Rhymney Hill and Sirhowy Sides
6. Cefn Manmoel
7. Trefil and Garnlydan Surrounds
8. Beaufort Common

Development within the defined Special Landscape Areas will be expected to conform to the highest standards of design, siting, layout and materials appropriate to the character of the area.

8.73 Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) are shown on the LDP Proposals Map and have been designated to protect areas that are considered to be important to the overall landscape, history, culture, biodiversity and geology of the County Borough. The designation of these landscape areas has been undertaken at a local level, using a regionally agreed methodology.

The methodology used to identify the SLA's in Blaenau Gwent builds on the Countryside Council for Wales LANDMAP methodology and considers factors such as:

- Prominence;
- Spectacle – dramatic topography and views;
- Unspoilt areas – pre-industrial patterns of land use;
- Remoteness and tranquility;
- Vulnerability and sensitivity to change;
- Locally rare landscape; and
- Special landscapes.

8.74 Brecon Beacons National Park do not identify any Special Landscape Areas. Blaenau Gwent's SLA boundaries match Caerphilly's SLAs and Visually Important Local Landscapes (VILLs) but do not reflect those identified in Torfaen as they used a different approach by relying entirely on LANDMAP. Although Blaenau Gwent used LANDMAP it supplemented this with additional local criteria.

8.75 In order to protect the visual qualities of each SLA, development proposals within these areas will be required to conform to the highest possible design standards.

8.76 Details of the SLAs are contained in the Blaenau Gwent Special Landscape Areas Report (2009).

Relevant Objective, Strategic Policy and Development Management Policies

- **Objective:** 13
- **Strategic Policy:** SP10
- **Development Management Policies:** DM14, DM15 and DM16

ENV3 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation are identified at the following locations:

Policy Number	Site Name	Policy Number	Site Name
Ebbw Vale Area			
1.	Beaufort Hill Ponds & Woodland	2.	Bryn Serth
3.	Bwlch-y-Garn North	4.	Bwlch y Garn South
5.	Castell-coryn Grassland	6.	Craig y Deri Pond
7.	Eastville Road Meadow	8.	Festival Lake
9.	Slopes of Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn (West) (1 of 2)	10.	Garden City
11.	Garden City Pond	12.	Garn-Cam-Isaf
13.	Garnlydan	14.	Hillside with acidic flushes
15.	Land Surrounding Wetland Centre	16.	Gorse Bank Field
17.	Meadowbank Field	18.	Pond 1709/045 Bwlch-y-Garn
19.	Land to the rear of Glyndwr Road, Rassau	20.	Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn and Cefn-yr-Arail, Ebbw Vale & Upper Ebbw Fach
21.	Waun-Lwyd species rich grassland	22.	Waun y Pound
23.	Pond Group 1	24.	Pond Group 3
25.	Pond Group 5	26.	Rassau Pond

Annex EDP 3.0 Glossary of LVIA Terms

TERM AND DEFINITION
Baseline
The existing (pre-development) landscape and visual context of a study area, including landscape fabric, landscape character and existing views. The landscape baseline is not static and may be changing for various reasons. The landscape baseline can also consider such factors and describe the likely future landscape character of the landscape, without the Proposed Development.
Effects
A predicted change in the environmental baseline as a result of the Proposed Development. Effects can be positive or negative.
Field Pattern
The pattern of hedges and walls that define fields in farmed landscapes (LI/IEMA 2002).
Intervisibility
Two points on the ground or two features are described as “intervisible” when they are visible from each other.
Landscape
Landscape results from the way that different aspects of our environment (physical, social, aesthetic and perceptual) interact together and are perceived by us: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical elements – e.g. geology, landform, soils, flora and fauna; Social elements – e.g. land use, enclosure patterns, and the patterns, form and scale of settlements and other built development; Aesthetic factors – e.g. colour, form, visual texture and pattern, sounds, smells and touch; and Perceptual factors – e.g. memories, associations, stimuli and preferences.
Landscape Capacity
The degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.
Landscape Character
Landscape character arises from a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of physical and social elements, aesthetic factors and perceptual aspects in the landscape.
Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)
Single unique areas that are discrete geographical areas containing one or more landscape types.
Landscape Character Types (LCTs)
Generic units of landscape that display a distinct, consistent and recognisable landscape character.
Landscape Condition
Description of the maintenance and condition of landscape elements and the degree to which landscape elements are representative of the landscape character area.
Landscape Element
A physical component (both natural and manmade) of the landscape.
Landscape Fabric
The elements and features that constitute the physical components of the landscape, including ground vegetation, hedgerows, trees, shrubs, walls, fences, and vernacular structures.
Landscape Units
An umbrella term for landscape character areas and landscape character types.

TERM AND DEFINITION
Landscape Value <p>The importance or value of the landscape to society, usually based on landscape designations or policies as indicators of recognised value.</p>
Mitigation <p>Measures, including any process, activity or design that will avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for the predicted significant effects of a development on the environmental baseline.</p>
Public Access <p>Land with public access includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definitive rights of way – public footpaths, bridleways, cycle routes, Byways Open to All Traffic (BOATS) and highways. Shown on Definitive Rights of Way maps held by the Local Authority. Most routes are also shown on Ordnance Survey maps; • Permissive paths and bridleways – routes where there is public access with the permission of the landowner. Such routes are usually closed at least one day a year to prevent establishment of a public right of way; • Public open space – areas designated for specified public uses, usually in the ownership of the Local Authority. Includes parks and recreation grounds. Shown on LDP; • Beaches – the public have permitted access to much of the foreshore (intertidal zone – between high and low tide marks) owned by the Crown Estate, and on land above high water mark owned by the Local Authority. Some beaches above high tide mark are privately owned and some beaches and foreshore have restricted access for military purposes; • Access land – land where public access is currently permitted with the permission of landowners. Includes land outlined in purple on the OS Explorer (1:25,000) sheets and with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No symbol – land open to public with permission of owners; ○ White oak leaf in purple box – National Trust, always open; ○ Purple oak leaf in white box – National Trust limited access; ○ Tree symbols in purple box – Forestry Commission; ○ Single leaf in purple box – Woodland Trust; and ○ White “AL” in purple box – other access land. • Open access land – areas of mountains, moor, heath, down, common land and coastal foreshore that have been designated under Section 2 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The right of access is for walkers only and does not extend to cycling, horse riding or driving a vehicle, nor does the right of access apply to developed land, gardens or cultivated land. Under the CRoW Act 2000, there was a process of consultation that allowed the right of appeal for those with a legal interest in the land, and for sensitive ecological or archaeological sites to be excluded. Conclusive maps showing the areas designated as open access land (Registered Common Land and Open Country) are now available from Natural Resources Wales.
Viewing Distance <p>That distance that a viewpoint illustration should be held from the eye in order for the illustration to match the scale of the actual view when used in the field to identify the location and scale of the Proposed Development.</p>
Visibility <p>Visibility is a measure of the distance that can be seen by the human eye at any one time. Daylight visibility will depend on several factors, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atmospheric transparency (governed by the solid and liquid particles held in suspension in the atmosphere); • Degree of contrast between an object and the background against which it is observed; • Position of the sun; and • Observer’s visual acuity.
Visual Receptor(s) <p>An individual observer or group of observers who are capable of experiencing a change in the view.</p>

TERM AND DEFINITION
Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)
The ZTVs consider the 'bareground' situation and assume excellent visibility with no atmospheric attenuation. The ZTVs therefore represent the maximum potential, theoretical visibility i.e. the worst-case situation. In reality, other components of the landscape such as forestry, trees, buildings etc. will introduce screening effects which, coupled with the atmospheric conditions, will reduce this visibility, in some instances to a considerable extent.

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