



Land adjacent Bro Dawel, Solva, Pembrokeshire

Proposed Residential Development

On behalf of Ateb Group Limited

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Prepared by

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 John Champion Associates Limited (JCA) have been commissioned by Ateb Group Limited, under instruction from Amity Planning, to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA), in support of a detailed planning application for residential development on land adjacent to Bro Dawel, Solva, Pembrokeshire.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared by John Champion, Chartered Landscape Architect, Director of JCA. He has extensive experience of landscape and visual impact assessment and landscape character and landscape capacity studies within Wales, including within protected landscapes – the Gower Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. He has worked on a wide range of projects, including environmental assessments, land restoration schemes, renewable energy infrastructure, and has also acted as a landscape expert witness. The latter roles have included representing Swansea Council, Pembrokeshire County Council, Carmarthenshire County Council, Powys County Council, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales and its predecessor, the Countryside Council for Wales. He has lectured on Landscape Design, Management and Professional Practice at the University of Manchester, Edinburgh College of Art (Heriot-Watt University), Sheffield University and Bristol University. For over twenty years, he was an examiner for the final professional practice examinations of the Landscape Institute.
- 1.3 This LVA was also peer-reviewed by David McQuitty, Associate Consultant to JCA, and a Chartered Landscape Architect with extensive experience of landscape and visual assessment. David McQuitty is familiar with the landscape of the locality and has also worked on several landscape commissions for projects within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.

2. SCOPE OF THE REPORT

- 2.1 This LVA has been prepared with reference to guidance, as far as it is appropriate to an appraisal of this nature, contained in:
- *“Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact assessment” (3rd Edition, 2013)*, published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Management and Environmental Assessment (GLVIA3);
 - *LANDMAP Methodology: Guidance for Wales (2013)* published by Natural Resources Wales; and

3. METHODOLOGY

Study Area

- 3.1 The Study Area for the assessment has been defined in accordance with the guidance provided in GLVIA3, which advises that the study area for a landscape assessment needs to cover *‘the Site itself and the wider landscape around it which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner’*.¹
- 3.2 Given the relatively small-scale nature and the particular characteristics of the development as envisaged - together with the nature of the local topography and the nearby presence of

¹ *Ibid.*, paragraph 5.2

intervening buildings – it is unlikely that any substantial effects would be experienced beyond 100 metres from the edges of the Site.

- 3.3 Wherever possible, the analysis has been objective, the residual effects quantified, and any subjective judgements have been described in clearly defined terms. Both objective analysis and subjective professional judgements are required for effective, high-quality landscape and visual analysis.

Surveys

- 3.4 Detailed desktop surveys were carried out of published material relevant to the landscape of the Site and its wider context. Material included maps, photographic evidence, historic landscape and cultural data, and relevant adopted local planning policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Landscape Character Assessment. Fieldwork enabled the recording of various landscape elements such as topography, land use and vegetation. From the analysis of this combination of material, it was possible to carry out an evaluation of landscape character and assess the predicted effects of the development as envisaged.

Assumptions

- 3.5 Reference to ‘the Site’ should be interpreted as the area contained within the boundary of the land which is likely to coincide with the future planning application red line boundary - see **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/01: Site Location, Landscape Context & Viewpoint Locations**.
- 3.6 All visual assessment field survey work has been undertaken from within publicly accessible areas only: where included, views from private properties are approximate and have been estimated, with reference to the nearest publicly-accessible location from which assessment could reasonably take place.

Assessment Viewpoints

- 3.7 A series of potential representative and specific visual assessment viewpoints - based on desktop analysis of mapped information and aerial photography, supported by local knowledge - was selected to be representative of the various groups of receptors whose views may be affected by the type of development under consideration, as well as views from specific key locations. The emphasis, when selecting viewpoints, was on taking an approach that is based upon *‘proportionality in relation to the scale and nature of the development proposal and its likely significant effects’*, in line with GLVIA3 as current published best practice guidance². However, it should be noted that the term ‘significant’ is not defined within this guidance, nor indeed within the Environmental Assessment Regulations where a formal landscape and visual impact assessment is required. This approach to viewpoint selection involves using professional judgement, and we identified potential locations from where likely *substantial* effects could occur. These candidate viewpoints were then reviewed in the field and refined, as necessary.

² GLVIA3; paragraph 6.21

3.8 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) has not been identified and mapped as part of this Appraisal. Given that the proposed development site is relatively small scale - and substantially screened by nearby buildings on three sides, with consequentially little effect on the surrounding landscape - it was our view that a computer-generated ZTV would give a misleading impression of potential visibility. The key to establishing an accurate baseline of visibility was the fieldwork survey. This was carried out by a very experienced professional landscape architect during bright early summer weather with excellent visibility, making appropriate allowances for the effects of leaf cover present on deciduous trees and shrubs, thus equating to the 'worst-case scenario' in terms of potential visibility.

Landscape Receptor Sensitivity

3.9 The term 'landscape receptor' means an element or a group of elements which will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Landscape receptors are physical elements or attributes of the landscape that could be affected by the development, such as landscape character, landform, watercourses, woodland, groups of trees or hedgerows, land uses and field boundaries.

3.10 Prior to the advent of the landscape character assessment procedure now used by local authorities, the sensitivity of a given landscape receptor was often defined in terms of landscape value, which took the form of national planning designations - such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty - or local designations, such as Areas of Great Landscape Value or Special Landscape Areas. Recent assessment guidance has placed greater emphasis on those landscapes which do not benefit from national or local designations, but which may be valued locally for particular reasons. In assessing the value of a given landscape, we have used the range of factors which can be taken into consideration as listed in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3³, insofar as they relate to the particular landscape context.

3.11 The sensitivity of landscape receptors is assessed by combining judgements on the susceptibility to the type of change proposed and the value attached to the landscape, in accordance with GLVIA3, and defined in *Table 1, below*:

Table 1: Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Sensitivity	Landscape Type or Feature
High	An area possessing a particularly distinctive sense of place, in good condition, or highly valued for its scenic quality and/or landscape character, for example National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coasts, Grade 1 Listed Buildings and historic parks; or an intact feature of high intrinsic value; [such as prominent trees or tree groups, forming a critical part of the landscape pattern or historic landscape pattern]; landscapes or features with a low tolerance to change of the type identified.
Medium	An area with a well-defined sense of place and/or character in moderate condition; or an area valued by designation at a local or regional level; or a partly damaged feature of high intrinsic value; or an intact feature of moderate

³ GLVIA3; p.84

Sensitivity	Landscape Type or Feature
	intrinsic value [such as prominent trees or tree groups which contribute to the character of the Site, screening of views, landscape or historic landscape pattern]; a landscape or feature which is partially tolerant of change of the type identified.
Low	An area with a poorly defined sense of place, and/or landscape character in poor condition, often not valued for its scenic quality; or a feature of low intrinsic value [such as trees and species-poor hedgerows of no special quality or function]; or a landscape or feature that is tolerant of change of the type identified.

Magnitude of Landscape Effect

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

Table 2: Magnitude of Landscape Effect

Landscape Effect Magnitude	Description
Major adverse landscape effect	The proposals will be at <i>complete variance</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape, and/or would <i>diminish or destroy</i> the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Moderate adverse landscape effect	The proposals will be <i>at odds</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and/or would cause a <i>noticeable diminution</i> of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Minor adverse landscape effect	The proposals will <i>not quite fit into</i> the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and/or would cause a <i>perceptible diminution</i> of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Negligible adverse landscape effect	The proposals will create a <i>barely perceptible diminution of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings</i> .
No change	The proposals will <i>not cause any change</i> to the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape.
Negligible landscape beneficial effect	The proposals will provide a <i>barely perceptible enhancement of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings</i> .

Landscape Effect Magnitude	Description
Minor landscape beneficial effect	The proposals will achieve <i>a degree of fit</i> with the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and <i>make a minor contribution to enhancing</i> the character, sense of place or integrity of the landscape.
Moderate landscape beneficial effect	The proposals <i>will fit well with</i> the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and would <i>noticeably enhance</i> the character, sense of place or integrity of the landscape.
Major landscape beneficial effect	The proposals <i>will fit very well with</i> the scale, landform, pattern, or character of the landscape and would <i>restore or greatly enhance</i> the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 3.13 The term 'visual receptor' means people - individuals and/or defined groups of people - who have the potential to be affected, directly or indirectly, by the proposals. Visual receptors are at accessible viewpoints, the sensitivity of which would be dependent on the location, the activity and expectations of the viewer, and the importance of the view. These would include viewpoints available to the users of outdoor facilities, sporting activities and users of public rights of way; viewpoints from landscape features and beauty spots; viewpoints outside local properties (which would represent the view for residents); and viewpoints available to people travelling through the landscape. Views may be glimpsed and fleeting, or open and sustained.
- 3.14 The determination of the sensitivity of the visual receptors is a matter of professional judgement. The guidance in GLVIA3⁴ recommends that the assessment of sensitivity will be dependent on:
- the location and context of a viewpoint;
 - the expectations and occupation or activity of the viewer;
 - the importance of the view (which may be determined with respect to its popularity, or the numbers of people affected, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, and in the facilities provided for its enjoyment and references to it in literature or art); and
 - the scale of the view and the extent and duration of visibility.

⁴ GLVIA3; paragraph 6.21

Table 3: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

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

3.15 The magnitude of visual effects depends on factors such as separation distance, the time of day, the season, the prevailing weather conditions, elevation, and aspect, as well as the context of the view. The predicted level of effect has been assessed during excellent visibility and bright light conditions in early summer. The assessment has given due consideration to the effects of the presence of leaves on deciduous vegetation and its consequential contribution to screening effects. All assessment viewpoints were visited on 1st June 2023.

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

Table 4: Magnitude of Visual Effect

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

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

Assessment of Overall Level of Effect

3.17 The scale shown in *Table 5, below*, has been adopted to assess the overall level of both landscape and visual effects and whether they are considered to be adverse, beneficial, or neutral. (*Note that neutral effects would be those where there may be a landscape or visual change, but the overall weighting of positive and negative effects is very finely balanced*). The basis of this scale is derived from professional experience. In accordance with good practice, the main aim in the reporting of the identified effects is to describe the key landscape and visual issues which are relevant to determining this planning application; for the purposes of this Appraisal, such effects are referred to as being *substantial*, and they include overall landscape or visual effects that are assessed as being moderate or greater. It should be noted that the term 'residual effects' used in this Appraisal refers to those effects which are predicted, having taken into account all the proposed mitigation measures.

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

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

Magnitude of Change	Receptor Sensitivity		
	High	Medium	Low
Major	Major Adverse/Beneficial	Moderate Adverse/Beneficial	Minor Adverse/Beneficial
Moderate	Major-Moderate Adverse/Beneficial	Moderate-Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor Adverse/Beneficial
Minor	Moderate-Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor-Negligible
Negligible	Minor-Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

Note: Those cells shaded in blue are considered to be *substantial* effects.

4. BASELINE CONDITIONS

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

Landscape Baseline

Location and Land Use

- 4.2 The Site is located in Upper Solva, immediately to the south of the A487 main road between Haverfordwest and St David's – refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/01: Site Location, Landscape Context & Viewpoint Locations**).
- 4.3 The Site itself consists of a single field, extending to an area of around 1.61 hectares. There are residential properties adjoining the site boundaries to the north-west and south-east; and there are other residential and commercial properties close by to the north-east, set along the north side of the A487 road. To the south and south-west is a playing field adjoining the Solva Clubhouse, a community facility, and a substantial area of open farmland stretching down to the edge of the coast. The Site appears to be in use as an informal car park administered by the Solva Community Council, as indicated by a sign facing onto the A487 road at the entrance gateway to the field situated in its north-eastern corner – refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/02: Context Photographs – Sheet 1**).

Topography

- 4.4 The Site is located within an area of gently sloping plateau land adjoining the coastal edge at around 62-64m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD). To the north-east, the land rises up through the built-up area of Upper Solva to a local high point on open ground at around 95m AOD located between Solva and the village of Whitchurch. To the south-west, the coastal edge is at between c. 53-55m AOD. To the south-east, the land falls steadily towards the western edge of the river estuary at Solva. To the west, the land falls more gently towards the small valley running south from the village of Llandruidion to the sea. The top edge of this valley is typically around 30-35m AOD.

Existing Site Vegetation and Site Boundaries

- 4.5 The south-western site boundary is demarcated by a continuous hedgebank typically around 1.6-2 metres high. The north-western site boundary is demarcated by an intermittent lower hedgebank with occasional trees which borders an access track which leads to the rear of residential properties and gardens at Bro Dawel. The north-eastern site boundary is demarcated by a continuous low hedgebank which forms the A487 road boundary. The south-eastern boundary is demarcated mostly by close-boarded timber fences to the rear curtilages of residential properties set along a cul-de-sac known as Maes yr Eglwys. There is also some intermittent hedgerow vegetation along the southern section of this boundary.
- 4.6 Within the Site, the vegetation is comprised entirely of grassland, some of which had been mown at the time of survey, apparently to facilitate car parking.

Existing Structures

- 4.7 There are no structures located within the Site except for a single set of football goal posts located in the western part of the Site, assumed to relate to the previous use of this land as a playing field.

Heritage Assets

- 4.8 In accordance with the guidance set out in GLVIA3⁵, this LVA deals only with the *visual setting* of heritage assets. It does not deal with the predicted effects on the value of any individual heritage asset.
- 4.9 The western extent of the Solva designated Conservation Area boundary⁶ lies at a lower elevation and is at its closest around 100 metres to the east of the north-eastern extremity of the Site, which does not form part of the visual setting of the Conservation Area.
- 4.10 The following Listed Buildings⁷ are located close to the Site, but they are not visible from it – refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/01: Site Location, Landscape Context & Viewpoint Locations**:
- *St Aidan's Church* at Upper Solva is a Grade II-Listed Building, a church of 19th-century origin located approximately 120 metres east of the nearest site boundary and at around 58m AOD. It is separated from the Site by intervening topography, built form and curtilage features and vegetation;
 - *Bank House*, a large residential property located on the western side of Whitchurch Road to the north-east. This is a Grade II Listed Building situated around 177 metres to the north-east of the nearest site boundary and, although at around 70m AOD, it has no inter-visibility with the Site because of intervening built form and curtilage features and vegetation.

The Site does not lie within the visual setting of either of these Listed Buildings.

- 4.11 There are two Scheduled Monuments within 1km of the Site ⁸ - refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/01: Site Location, Landscape Context & Viewpoint Locations**:
- The nearest such heritage asset is *Porth-y-Rhaw Camp*, an earthwork located approximately 0.87km to the south-west of the Site and at around 25-30m AOD. There is no inter-visibility between this heritage asset and the Site because of the separation distance, intervening topography, and intervening built form or dense woodland cover, as well as curtilage features and field boundary hedgerows with occasional trees;
 - To the south-east is the *Promontory Fort south of Solva Harbour*, located on the eastern side of the river estuary. It is around 0.55kms distant from the nearest site boundary and at around 50m AOD; there is no inter-visibility with the Site because of intervening topography, built form and vegetation cover – see **Photograph C8 at Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/03 Context Photographs - Sheet 2**.

⁵ GLVIA3, op.cit.; paragraph 5.11; and 'Summary Advice on Best Practice', p.93

⁶ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park LDP2 website, interrogated on 6th June 2023

⁷ Cadw website map interrogated on 31st May 2023

⁸ Cadw website map interrogated on 31st May 2023

The Site does not therefore lie within the visual setting of either of these Scheduled Monuments.

- 4.12 The closest Registered Historic Park and Gardens (Grade II) is at Warpool Court Hotel, near St David's. This heritage asset is located around 4.6km from the Site. This heritage asset has no inter-visibility with the Site, due to the separation distance, combined with intervening built form and dense field boundary hedgerows with trees and dense woodland vegetation.
- 4.13 The Site does not lie within the St David's Peninsula and Ramsey Island Registered Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales identified by Cadw. The closest boundary of this Registered Historic Landscape is around 0.88kms to the west of the Site. Intervening woodland and trees, together with built form and curtilage features prevent intervisibility with the Site, which therefore does not lie within the visual setting of this heritage asset.

Public Rights of Way

- 4.14 No local public footpath right of way crosses the Site.
- 4.15 The nearest public right of way, public footpath (PP102/30), runs southwards from the A487 the road at Maes yr Eglwys within the residential area adjoining the south-eastern boundary of the Site, and links to public footpath PP102/31 which connects to Glanhafan and St Bride's View.⁹ From the southern end of the St Bride's View cul-de-sac, public footpath PP102/20 runs southwards from this edge of Upper Solva to meet the Wales Coast Path at around 160 metres distant. Approximately 150 metres further to the south, the Coast Path (routed along a section of PP102/20) turns sharply to the west and then follows the cliff top on a generally west-north-west alignment. At a point about 0.86 km along this route, the Coast Path intersects with a local public right of way (PP102/23) which connects back to the A487 at a point located to the north of the farmstead and hamlet known as Llanunwas, to the north-west of Bro Dawel and around 0.4kms to the west of the north-western extremity of the Site - refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/01: Site Location, Landscape Context & Viewpoint Locations.**

Public Roads

- 4.16 The main public road which adjoins the north-eastern site boundary is the A487 between Haverfordwest and St David's. Minor residential access roads nearby are cul-de-sacs which serve the residential properties at Maes yr Eglwys and Bro Dawel.

Landscape Character Assessment

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

⁹ Pembrokeshire Consolidated Definitive Rights of Way Map interrogated 5th June 2023

National Landscape Character Areas

4.18 National Landscape Character Areas (NLCAs) form the broadest scale of landscape character assessment in Wales. The information published by Natural Resources Wales (NRW) records 48 discrete NLCAs. Amongst the uses which NRW provides are the following:

- *'a summary description and list of key characteristics linked to regional identity*
- *short narratives capturing visual, geological, habitat, historic and cultural influences.'*¹⁰

4.19 The National Landscape Character study places the proposed development site within the identified NLCA 43, 'West & North Pembrokeshire Coast'. The *Summary Description* for this NLCA is as follows:

'The area represents the western and northern extents of the Pembrokeshire coastline and hinterland. Much of the area is within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The gently undulating, productive, agricultural landscape is edged by some of the most spectacular and rugged coastline in southern Britain. The landscape dramatically terminates with steep cliffs, and includes a number of remote islands, being remnants of peninsulas. The coastal areas also include a number of distinctively shaped rocky hills, that together with coastal slopes, include areas of heather and heath, stone walls or hedgebanks, and a far more remote feeling than many of the nearby inland landscapes.

The area includes a number of Registered Historic landscapes and notably the 'city' of St David's, home to Wales' Patron Saint, with it's fine cathedral set inconspicuously within a sheltered valley yet near the old sea routes of the west. In contrast the modern port at Fishguard is one of the principle ferry routes to Ireland from Britain, and is the focus for rail and road links from South Wales, as well as the largest settlements in the area.

*The area is of international importance for it's coastal landscape and wildlife, and there are many popular tourist destination 'honeypots' with walking, beach and various coastal recreational pursuits, including boat trips to some of the islands to observe wildlife.'*¹¹

4.20 The following identified 'Key Characteristics' of the 15 identified for the West & North Pembrokeshire Coast NLCA are discernible in the context of the Site at Upper Solva and the wider locality:

- *'A spectacular coastal edge to part of south-west Wales – this is the main unifying characteristic of the area.'*
- *'Dissected plateau landscape – comparatively gentle, settled, farmed land, compared to the coastline.'*
- *'Coastal heath - although the rugged and windswept coastal heaths are common grazed, inland areas are enclosed: with larger mixed arable land in the south and smaller fields in parts of the north, some of these bounded hedgebanks with proven origins in the prehistoric period.'*
- *'Smaller fields in rougher ground - with hedgebanks and walls.'*¹²

LANDMAP

4.21 The LANDMAP system has been developed specifically for the assessment of character in the landscape of Wales. The system was developed by the Countryside Council for Wales (now

¹⁰ NRW website entry at 5th June 2023; p.2; date of information is given as 31st March 2014

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.2

¹² *Ibid.*, p.3

Natural Resources Wales) and has been implemented in partnership with Local Planning Authorities throughout Wales. Much of the methodology is underpinned by earlier work carried out by the Countryside Agency – the government body formerly with statutory responsibility for England’s countryside (now Natural England) – in the preparation of their document, the 'Character Map of England'. This has classified the whole of England by describing Landscape Character Areas (LCAs), defined as being:

‘...single unique areas which are discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type.’

4.22 LANDMAP, introduced in 1997, was revolutionised in 2003 with the introduction of a benchmark methodology and incorporation of a quality assurance process to ensure consistency, accuracy, and accessibility of landscape information in Wales. LANDMAP data was used in the preparation of the National Landscape Character Areas study.

4.23 It should also be noted that the CCW (NRW) has arrived at a working definition of landscape as follows:

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

4.24 We have therefore reviewed the Landscape Character of the Site and its landscape context using the most recent published LANDMAP Aspect Area data, in accordance with the ‘Summary advice on good practice’ in Chapter 5 of GLVIA3. This advice states that:

*‘Existing assessments must be reviewed critically as their quality may vary, some may be dated and some may not be suited to the task in hand...
..... and may need to be reviewed and interpreted to adapt them for use in LVIA, and fieldwork should check the applicability of the assessment throughout the study area and refine it where necessary.’¹³*

Although there are five constituent Aspects within the LANDMAP data, the LANDMAP methodology for landscape characterisation notes that Landscape Character Areas are to be defined using the Visual & Sensory (VS) Aspect Area as a starting point, then refined by examining the data from other Aspects. The following landscape character descriptions are taken direct from the current published LANDMAP Collector data for the Visual & Sensory (VS) Aspect Areas, together with the other four Aspects produced as part of the LANDMAP study for this area. This information generally includes their summary description, evaluation, and classification; LANDMAP Aspects are ‘organised according to a hierarchical classification system’ consisting of four levels of increasing detail from Level 1 to Level 4, and the guidance states that ‘LANDMAP Aspect Areas must be identified to Level 3’, based upon landform and landcover.¹⁴ We have therefore provided the classification for all Aspect Areas at Level 3, in line with the above guidance.

4.25 LANDMAP places the Site within the VS Aspect Area identified as ‘Coastal Plateau’ PEMBRKVS111. We note that the original assessment was carried out in March 2012 and that

¹³ GLVIA3, op.cit.; ‘Summary Advice on Best Practice’, p.93

¹⁴ LANDMAP Methodology, p.3; Natural Resources Wales; 2013

monitoring work was carried out by Bronwen Thomas in February 2015. The record itself remained unchanged following the monitoring work.¹⁵

- 4.26 This Aspect Area is classified at Level 3 as being Open Rolling Lowland. It encompasses land between Solva and St David's. The Summary Description of the land within this Aspect Area is quoted in full below:

*'An area of coastal plateau agricultural landscape abutting the south coast between St David's and Solva comprised of a typical west Pembrokeshire landscape featuring gently undulating farmland with an open character... visitor views within the Aspect Area as well as accessible borrowed views to the coast, and to buildings within St David's town, including the Cathedral which add to the sense of place...'*¹⁶

JCA Commentary:

The gently sloping nature of the local terrain, combined with the enclosure provided by the built edges of Solva and mature hedgebanks, means that there are limited views of the coast from the Site and the agricultural land to the south and south-west. There are no views of St David's obtainable from the Site or its immediate locality.

- 4.27 LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value – that is, of regional or county importance. For this Aspect Area, the 'Overall Evaluation' notes that:

'The Aspect Area has attractive views of St David's and the coast which enhance the otherwise typical agricultural landscape seen in other parts of Pembrokeshire...'

*'The Aspect area's evaluation reflects the underlying quality of the area notwithstanding its commonplace occurrence throughout the study area.'*¹⁷

JCA Commentary:

As noted above, there are only limited views of the coast from the Site and its immediate vicinity. The western edges of the city of St David's are not visible from the Site itself or from its immediate vicinity.

- 4.28 LANDMAP places the Site within the Cultural Landscape Services Aspect Area identified as 'Coastal Plateau' PEMBRKCLS215. This Aspect Area is classified at Level 3 as being Open Rolling Lowland.¹⁸

- 4.29 LANDMAP places the Site within the Historic Landscape Aspect Area identified as 'Llanunwas PEMBRKHL46225'. This is a geographically long yet narrow Aspect Area, running from the edge of Caswell Bay to Mumbles. It is classified at Level 3 as being Regular Fieldscapes. The Summary Description includes the following observations:

'Llanunwas is a small aspect area (1.609 sq km) of exposed coastal plateau. It is a windswept, treeless landscape of medium-large, regular fields, around the village of Solva. Settlement within the farmland itself is limited to the large farm of Llanunwas, and three smaller farms, all of which are informal. However, pockets of development belonging to

¹⁵ NRW LANDMAP Portal interrogated 30th May 2023

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the village of Solva intrude into the field system. There are no listed buildings and no Scheduled Ancient Monuments' ¹⁹

- 4.30 LANDMAP evaluates this Aspect Area as being of 'Moderate' value - being of local importance. The Justification of the Overall Evaluation includes the following observation:

'The moderate overall value assigned to this area chiefly reflects the relatively modest scope of the archaeological record and the increasing encroachment by late 20th century housing development on the southern fringes of this landscape detracting from its overall coherence....' ²⁰

- 4.31 LANDMAP places the Site within the Geological Landscape Aspect Area identified as 'Solva' SWNSGL097. This Aspect Area is classified at Level 3 as Undulating Lowland Hill Terrain. The entry for geographical and topographical character of the area contains the following description:

'Gently undulating terrain W of the Solva river and rising to around 90m. Dominated by Cambrian slates and sandstones with Precambrian to the NE. Gently slopes towards coast and rises to a slight ridge in the N.' ²¹

- 4.32 LANDMAP evaluates this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value - being of regional or county importance. The Justification of the Overall Evaluation notes as follows:

'Key area of Cambrian outcrop including key sites' ²²

- 4.33 LANDMAP places the Site within the Landscape Habitats Aspect Area identified as 'St. David's Peninsula Farmland' PEMBRKLH996. This Aspect Area is classified at Level 3 as Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats. It is described as being:

'An area of largely improved grassland but also with a considerable arable element comprising that comprises a considerable number of fields with associated field boundaries. Also present are small areas of a number of other habitats, most notably marshy grassland, dense scrub, semi-improved neutral grassland and very small areas of dry heath.' ²³

- 4.34 LANDMAP evaluates this Aspect Area as being of 'Moderate' value - being of local importance. The Justification of the Overall Evaluation includes the statement that it is:

'Generally low value improved grassland and arable land but the mosaic of these two habitats adds variety and the coastal influence and presence of some small areas of Priority habitat add to the value.' ²⁴

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.35 Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, in partnership with the Countryside Council for Wales, and The National Trust (Gower Landscape Partnership), commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment for the designated area of the national park which was issued in 2007. This Assessment was based upon all five Aspects of LANDMAP data, supplemented by detailed fieldwork, in order to identify, demarcate, map, and describe areas of common landscape character – 'Landscape Character Areas'. This information was revised and updated in 2015 as

¹⁹ NRW LANDMAP Portal interrogated 30th May 2023

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

part of work on the Local Development Plan LDP2). It now forms part of adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for LDP2.²⁵

- 4.36 The Assessment identified 28 discrete Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The Site lies just within the identified 'LCA 14 Solva Valley'. The Solva Valley LCA is described in summary as follows:

*'This small LCA is strongly founded upon the physical form of the enclosed Solva valley, incised into the coastal plateau and running to the sea on the north coast of St Brides Bay. Solva, with its traditional harbour and distinctive local architecture, is now very popular with the sailing fraternity, which belies its past importance as a commercial port associated with the local lime industry and related coastal trade.'*²⁶

The 'Visual and Sensory Characteristics' description for this LCA notes that the settlement is:

*'A small scale and attractive estuarine village well situated on the west bank of the lower Solva river. The oldest parts of the village possess a traditional character due to the prevalence and extent of traditional cottages, running inland from the harbour - with its colourful small boats - along the pleasant wooded valley of the Solva river. The village has a strong coastal association and the views to the coast from the harbour impart a strong sense of place to the village.'*²⁷

- 4.37 One of two identified 'Discernible Landscape Trends' for the Solva LCA is particularly relevant to the landscape context of the proposed development site:

*'The upper parts of the more recently settled western fringe areas of the village have lost their traditional built form and character, with the result that the sense of place is lost beyond the oldest parts of Upper Solva.'*²⁸

- 4.38 The stated 'Management Guidelines' for the Solva LCA include the following recommendation which is directly relevant to the landscape context of the proposed development site:

*'Conserve the traditional built character of this coastal village and its landscape setting, and promote the proper visual assimilation of the edges of Upper Solva into the surrounding agricultural landscape through planting schemes by agreement.'*²⁹

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

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

- Existing land use;
- Landscape scale and pattern;

²⁵ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Planning Policy website; SPG interrogated 6th June 2023

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park; Landscape SPG, *op.cit.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

- Landscape value³⁰ and quality (condition)³¹;
- Nature of views and degree of visual enclosure and openness;
- Landscape designations present; and
- Scope for mitigation.

4.40 The overall sensitivity of a landscape is categorised as high, medium, or low for the purposes of this Appraisal. This Appraisal is derived from analysis in relation to the above stated representative criteria.

4.41 *Table 6, below, provides information relating to the various criteria affecting landscape sensitivity, which are used to arrive at a final overall level of sensitivity for the local landscape.*

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

LANDSCAPE ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Land Use	The Site comprises part of a single grassland field. It is currently used as an informal car park managed by the Solva Community Council. To the north-west, north-east, and south-east of the Site are residential areas. To the south and south-west of the Site the land is mostly in agricultural use, except for the playing field adjoining the Solva Clubhouse, a local community asset.
Scale and Pattern	The scale of the wider local landscape beyond the built-up area is small-medium, determined primarily by the field pattern and the associated field boundary hedgebanks and occasional belts or pockets of woodland. Beyond the western edges of Upper Solva, the settlement pattern is sparse and dispersed, as can be seen in Appendix, Figure JCA/03, Landscape Context Photographs – Sheet 2, Photograph C6.
Value and Quality	The Site lies adjacent to a busy main road which is also a bus route and is bounded on three sides by built form. There is no Conservation Area in this part of Solva. The Solva Conservation Area boundary is around 100 metres distant to the east and at a lower elevation than the Site and there is no intervisibility. The nearest Listed Buildings are situated at least 0.4km from the nearest boundary of the Site and there is no intervisibility. The nearest Scheduled Monument is approximately 0.55km to the south-east of the Site, screened from the view by intervening topography, woodland, and mature field boundary hedgerow vegetation. The Site does not lie within the St David’s Registered Historic Landscape nor within its visual setting.

³⁰ *Landscape Value* - defined by GLVIA3 as being: ‘The relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society. A landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons.’

³¹ *Landscape quality (condition)* – defined by GLVIA3 as being: ‘A measure of the physical state of the landscape. It may include the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements.’

LANDSCAPE ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Nature of Views	Views within and out from the Site and its vicinity are constrained by the residential development enclosing the Site on three sides and the mature field boundary hedgebank to the south-west. For the same reasons, there are no close-to medium range views into the Site from adjoining areas of farmland. These factors mean that only very small parts of the Site are visible from most locations within the surrounding land, even at close to medium range.
Landscape Designations	The Site lies wholly within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park.
Potential Scope for Mitigation	Retention, conservation, and rehabilitation of as much of the boundary vegetation as practicable – especially the intact south-western boundary hedgebank - supplemented by additional appropriate tree and shrub planting, in keeping with the field boundary characteristics typical of the wider locality.
<p>Overall Landscape Sensitivity of Site: in relation to its ability to accommodate development of the scale, nature, and extent proposed</p>	<p>Medium <i>Reasoning:</i> The Site lies wholly within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, which in itself meets the criterion for a <i>high</i> level of landscape sensitivity. However, the Site itself and its vicinity have important landscape attributes which mean that its landscape sensitivity to the type, scale and nature of the development proposed is <i>medium</i> – it is a landscape which is partially tolerant of change of the type identified. The scale of the wider local landscape is small-medium, with built form, local topography and mature hedgebanks, tree and woodland cover providing significant local enclosure and restricting views. The proposed residential development will sit within the existing field pattern and close to the existing residential areas, resulting in a logical rounding-off of this part of the settlement edge at Upper Solva. The proposed small-scale development site is substantially enclosed by existing disparate built form, together with mature curtilage features and boundary vegetation. Residential development of the scale and type proposed would not be out of character in this context. The proposed development could be readily assimilated into the local landscape setting, with the retention, conservation, and rehabilitation of existing boundary hedgebanks where practicable.</p>

Visual Baseline

Visual Receptors

- 4.42 Residential receptors are amongst the most sensitive to visual impacts.
- 4.43 *Residential Properties:* A few nearby residential properties will have some close-range views of the development, due to intervening topography, built form or boundary and curtilage vegetation, or combinations of these landscape elements. To the north-west of the Site, a block of four two-storey houses in the Bro Dawel area have rear elevations and curtilages which face the Site. Views from their ground floor windows towards the Site are restricted by the nearby field boundary vegetation, as well as significant garden curtilage fences, walls, and outbuildings. Other houses in Bro Dawel do not face onto the Site. To the south-east, five single-storey houses in the Maes yr Eglwys area have rear elevations and rear garden curtilages which face onto the Site. At all of these houses, the rear garden boundaries are demarcated by tall close-boarded timber fences, so there are no views into the Site. Two other houses on this road have gable ends facing towards the Site. To the north-east, there are several more two-storey residential properties set along the northern side of the A487, beyond an access road running parallel. Here some houses have tall boundary fences and garden boundary hedges which restrict views out towards the Site from their ground floor windows and south-western curtilages.
- 4.44 *Public Rights of Way:* There are no public rights of way which cross the Site. The closest public right of way is the local public footpath along the residential access road into Maes yr Eglwys, to the south-east of the Site. Other local public footpaths connect this route to the Wales Coast Path via St Bride's View. The Wales Coast Path runs along the cliff tops to the south and south-west of the southernmost edge of Upper Solva - refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/01: Site Location, Landscape Context & Viewpoint Locations**. Obtainable views towards the Site from the Wales Coast Path are substantially obscured by intervening built form, as well as mature boundary and curtilage vegetation, or flanking hedgebanks along the route or forming field boundaries across the intervening land.
- 4.45 *Designated Access Land:* There is no Designated Access Land within, adjoining or close to the Site. The nearest such land is in a narrow band at the edge of the cliffs to the south, south-east and south-west, and there are no views into the Site from here because of intervening topography, built form, and field boundary hedgebanks.
- 4.46 *Surrounding Public Roads:* There are close-range views obtainable from that section of the main A487 road between Haverfordwest and St. David's which adjoins the north-eastern site boundary. There are no views into the Site from the residential access roads (cul-de-sacs) serving the nearby Bro Dawel and Maes yr Eglwys residential areas.

5. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The elements of the development under consideration which have been used to inform this Appraisal have been assumed as follows:
- A mixture of single-storey and two-storey houses, 17 units in total;
 - Construction materials would be as shown on the relevant submitted drawings;

- The houses would all have pitched roofs. The ridge top height of the houses closest to the A487 will have a maximum ridge top height of 8.8 metres;
- The proposed access to the Site would be located opposite the Bayview Stores and Post Office, around 50 metres to the west of the existing field gateway in the north-eastern corner of the Site.

(Refer to the various architectural drawings prepared by Pentan Architects and the Design & Access Statement prepared by Amity Planning).

Mitigation

5.2 There are essentially two categories of mitigation measures:

- *Primary* measures that intrinsically comprise part of the development design through an iterative process;
- *Secondary* measures designed to specifically address the remaining (residual) negative (adverse) impacts of the final development proposals.

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal relates to the predicted residual effects which remain with the suggested both primary and secondary mitigation measures in place.

5.3 Primary Measures for the proposed development include:

- The siting of the proposed houses within the existing field pattern and set within a field which has a character more in keeping with the settlement at Upper Solva than the open agricultural land beyond. It would fit within the existing structure of the landscape and would respect the pattern and character of the landscape of the wider locality. This would therefore not noticeably influence the character of the surrounding land;
- Retaining and enhancing the existing boundary hedgebanks and other boundary vegetation, wherever practicable;
- The scale and form of the prospective buildings and their immediate landscape setting have been designed to be harmonious and respectful of the context of this part of the settlement adjacent to an area of long-established open coastal farming landscape.

Secondary measures include:

- Hard and soft landscape and boundary materials to be selected which would be sympathetic to local landscape character;
- Rehabilitation and favourable management of the retained boundary hedgebanks and some sections of new hedgebank along internal boundaries where appropriate would further assist in assimilating the new houses into the local landscape.

(Refer to the various architectural drawings prepared by Pentan Architects and the Design & Access Statement prepared by Amity Planning).

6. MAGNITUDE AND OVERALL LEVEL OF EFFECTS

Elements of the Proposed Development which have the Potential to cause Landscape and/or Visual Effects

6.1 The following is a schedule of the main elements of the proposed development that would have the potential to cause landscape and/or visual effects:

- Erection of site compound, temporary storage areas, safety fencing and the construction of temporary access routes, structures, and facilities; associated movement of vehicles, plant, and machinery;
- The construction of new houses;
- Potential effects on public visual receptors in the landscape.

Assessment of Effects on the Landscape Resource

6.2 Landscape effects are defined as changes in the elements, characteristics, and qualities of the landscape because of development. These effects can be positive, negative, or neutral. When identifying and assessing landscape change, it is important to consider the existing trends for change within the landscape, which may be due to natural processes or human activities.

6.3 There will be effects on the landscape fabric of the Site during the construction phase because of building demolition, vegetation removal, ground disturbance, temporary site works (including the stockpiling and storage of construction materials and stripped topsoil and turf), and the associated activities of vehicles, plant, and machinery. Disturbance will be short term, and all temporarily affected surfaces will be restored on completion of construction.

Effects on Landscape Character

6.4 The Pembrokeshire LANDMAP study placed the Site within the Visual & Sensory Aspect Area identified as 'Coastal Plateau' PEMBRKVS111. The 'Summary Description' of the land within the Coastal Plateau Aspect Area is quoted in full below:

'An area of coastal plateau agricultural landscape abutting the south coast between St David's and Solva comprised of a typical west Pembrokeshire landscape featuring gently undulating farmland with an open character... visitor views within the Aspect Area as well as accessible borrowed views to the coast, and to buildings within St David's town, including the Cathedral which add to the sense of place... .' ³²

6.5 LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value – that is, of regional or county importance. For this Aspect Area, the 'Overall Evaluation' notes that:

'The Aspect Area has attractive views of St David's and the coast which enhance the otherwise typical agricultural landscape seen in other parts of Pembrokeshire...'
'The Aspect area's evaluation reflects the underlying quality of the area notwithstanding its commonplace occurrence throughout the study area.' ³³

JCA Commentary:

As noted above, there are only limited views of the coast from the Site and its immediate vicinity. The western edges of the city of St David's are not visible from the Site itself or from its immediate vicinity. To the south and south-west of Upper Solva, there is a higher degree of enclosure by built form, field boundary hedgebanks, and some belts or pockets of woodland. as well as mature field boundary hedgerows with trees. As a consequence, it is a small-medium scale landscape which, beyond the settlement edges, is dominated by grassland and arable farming land use.

³² NRW LANDMAP Portal interrogated 30th May 2023

³³ *Ibid.*

- 6.6 The Pembrokeshire Coast Landscape Assessment places the Site within the Landscape Character Area LCA14 Solva Valley. This is described as follows:

*'This small LCA is strongly founded upon the physical form of the enclosed Solva valley, incised into the coastal plateau and running to the sea on the north coast of St Brides Bay. Solva, with its traditional harbour and distinctive local architecture, is now very popular with the sailing fraternity, which belies its past importance as a commercial port associated with the local lime industry and related coastal trade.'*³⁴

The 'Visual and Sensory Characteristics' description for this LCA notes that the settlement is:
*'A small scale and attractive estuarine village well situated on the west bank of the lower Solva river. The oldest parts of the village possess a traditional character due to the prevalence and extent of traditional cottages, running inland from the harbour - with its colourful small boats - along the pleasant wooded valley of the Solva river. The village has a strong coastal association and the views to the coast from the harbour impart a strong sense of place to the village.'*³⁵

JCA Commentary:

The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Landscape Character Assessment (updated in 2015) is a more refined study which more accurately describes the local landscape character in the vicinity of the Site and its wider locality. The level of overall landscape sensitivity ascribed to the Site and its locality is *medium* (refer to Table 6, above). The construction of 17 new houses on a site substantially enclosed by existing built form is a minor change and would result in no unacceptable adverse effects on the quality or character of the Solva Valley LCA. as identified in the Gower Landscape Character Assessment. The stated 'Management Guidelines' for the Solva LCA include the following recommendation which is directly relevant to the landscape context of the proposed development site:

*'Conserve the traditional built character of this coastal village and its landscape setting, and promote the proper visual assimilation of the edges of Upper Solva into the surrounding agricultural landscape through planting schemes by agreement.'*³⁶

Upper Solva has none of the traditional built form attributes of Lower Solva. There is no scope for off-site planting to the edges of the Site and there is a marked absence of tree and shrub cover in the locality, as is typical of the more exposed sections of the Pembrokeshire coastal edge. Retained, conserved, or rehabilitated hedgebanks to field boundaries – and for internal boundaries, where appropriate – would assist in assimilating the new development into the receiving landscape with an enhanced sense of place.

- 6.7 During the construction stage, there will be a local *moderate* magnitude of change on the Site - a *medium* sensitivity landscape receptor - resulting in a *moderate-minor* adverse level of landscape effect which would *not be substantial*. At the end of construction, and when boundary and curtilage treatments are fully established, the level of residual landscape effect on the Site will be *minor adverse* and so *not substantial*. With regard to the wider landscape effects, the Site is on the periphery of the western extension of the Solva Valley LCA, at the edge of Upper Solva, the landscape of which is not representative of the Solva Valley LCA. Consequently, the magnitude of change on this high sensitivity LCA is considered to be

³⁴ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park; Landscape SPG, op.cit.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

negligible adverse, resulting in a *minor-negligible adverse* level of landscape effect which is *not substantial*.

Massing and Scale in the Surrounding Landscape

- 6.8 The proposal is for a modest scale residential development sited within part of a field in a manner which would fit within the existing structure of the landscape, and which would respect the pattern and landscape character of the locality. It would be in scale with the surrounding village edges at Upper Solva and the adjacent rural landscape, and its massing would be sympathetic to its location. We consider that there will be a *minor* magnitude of change arising from the potential massing and scale of the proposed development and the effects on this area of *medium* sensitivity to the type of development proposed are therefore considered to be *moderate-minor adverse* and so *not substantial*.

Physical Landscape Effects on Topography

- 6.9 The construction of the proposed development would involve some minor local alterations to ground levels. Physical changes to topography from the development as envisaged are therefore assessed as being *minor adverse* and so *not substantial*.

Vegetation

- 6.10 The existing north-eastern site boundary hedgebank is not continuous and is an inconspicuous feature for much of its length. This would be retained, conserved, and enhanced. The existing north-western boundary hedgerow is primarily composed of native species but is intermittent and in poor condition due to inappropriate management. This boundary feature would be rehabilitated by being brought into favourable management, including supplementary planting of appropriate native shrubs to close gaps as well as occasional trees. The existing south-western boundary hedgebank would be retained and brought into favourable management. New hedgebanks will form some boundary features both within and surrounding the proposed development. As a consequence, the overall predicted residual effects on the site vegetation are therefore assessed as being *minor beneficial*.

Public Rights of Way

- 6.11 No existing public right of way crosses the Site and there will be *no direct effects* on this element of the landscape resource.

Effects on the Visual Setting of Heritage Assets

- 6.12 The visual settings of the nearest Listed Buildings and the two Scheduled Monuments in the wider locality would be unaffected by the potential development, as a consequence of the separation distances involved and the nature and extent of intervening built form, landform, or land cover, or a combination of these factors.

Overall Landscape Effects

Overall Landscape Sensitivity

- 6.13 We have assessed the local Landscape Character Area as being of *high* landscape sensitivity, as a consequence of its *de facto* location within the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, in accordance with our definitions as listed in *Table 1, above*. However, we have ascribed a *medium* level of overall landscape sensitivity to the Site itself and its immediate locality, for

the following reasons: the proposed development will be an in-filling scheme within the existing residential settlement areas of Upper Solva fronting onto the A487 main road; there is a considerable degree of enclosure by built form on three sides; a continuous hedgebank along the south-western boundary provides further enclosure (*see Table 6, above*).

Overall Magnitude of Change

- 6.14 Most of the existing landscape features of value will be retained on the site boundaries. Boundary features around and within the Site will include retained, conserved, and enhanced hedgebanks designed to be sympathetic to the local context. The houses will vary in scale, form, orientation, and materials, appropriate to the location. As a result, there will be a *major* magnitude of change on the Site itself. However, the magnitude of change to the local landscape of Upper Solva will be *moderate* since the development will be seen as a logical rounding-off of the perceived settlement edge.

Overall Magnitude and Level of Landscape Effects

- 6.15 Given the *medium* overall sensitivity of the landscape receptor and the *moderate* landscape magnitude of change to the Site itself, the predicted level of effect on the landscape of the Site during construction and at completion is *moderate adverse*, and so *substantial*. The careful layout and siting of the houses, set within the retained, conserved, rehabilitated, and enhanced boundary hedgebanks, would result in a design which is compatible with the surrounding land uses and local landscape character. The residual landscape effects on the vicinity within Upper Solva, once all the proposed mitigation measures have taken effect, would be *moderate-minor adverse* and so *not substantial*.

Assessment of Visual Effects of the Prospective Development

General

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

A series of representative and specific viewpoints have been established to inform the visual assessment - *see Appendix: Illustrations, Figures JCA/04 to JCA/10*. The summary of the predicted visual effects from these viewpoints is set out in *Table 7, below*.

Table 7: Viewpoint Assessment Summary

Nr	Location	Designation	Receptor(s)	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect [During Construction/At Completion/With Mitigation]	Overall Level of Visual Effect [During Construction/ At Completion/ With Mitigation]
VP1	Westbound footway of A487 close to the existing field gateway into the Site <i>Ordnance Survey Grid Ref SM 7978 2436</i>	Public road in national park	Road and footway users	Medium	Major adverse Moderate adverse Minor adverse	Moderate adverse Moderate-minor adverse Minor adverse
VP2	Access road in front of Bayview Stores & Post Office, approximately 20m N of the Site <i>OSGR SM 7975 2438</i>	Public local access road within national park	Road Users Residential	Medium High*	Major adverse Moderate adverse Moderate adverse	Major adverse Major-moderate adverse Major-moderate adverse <i>Substantial</i>
VP3	Westbound footway of A487 close to bus stop near Bro Dawel <i>OSGR SM 7966 2439</i>	Public road within national park	Road and footway Users	Medium	Moderate adverse Moderate adverse Minor adverse	Moderate-minor adverse Moderate-minor adverse Minor adverse
VP4	Access road to rear of houses and to gardens at Bro Dawel, just E of NW site boundary <i>OSGR SM 7962 2433</i>	Public local access road	Residential	High	Moderate adverse Moderate adverse Moderate adverse	Major-moderate adverse Major-moderate adverse Major-moderate adverse <i>Substantial</i>
VP5	Public right of way footpath S of Upper Solva, approximately 0.34km SE of the Site <i>OSGR SM 7985 2405</i>	Wales Coast Path within national park Access Land	Recreational	High	Minor adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Moderate-minor adverse Minor-negligible adverse Minor-negligible adverse
VP6	Public right of way footpath SW of Upper Solva, approximately 0.34km SE of the Site <i>OSGR SM 7915 2393</i>	Wales Coast Path within national park Access Land	Recreational	High	Minor adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Moderate-minor adverse Minor-negligible adverse Minor-negligible adverse

Nr	Location	Designation	Receptor(s)	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect [During Construction/At Completion/With Mitigation]	Overall Level of Visual Effect [During Construction/ At Completion/ With Mitigation]
VP7	Public footpath S of Llaunwas, approximately 0.42km W of the Site <i>OSGR SM 7918 2426</i>	Local public right of way footpath within national park	Recreational	High	No change No change No change	No change No change No change

* Assessed as being the worst-case scenario, i.e. on residential receptors, having the higher level of ascribed visual sensitivity.

Residential Receptors

- 6.17 Residential receptors are amongst the most sensitive to visual effects. In accordance with GLVIA 3rd Edition, the assessment of visual effects is based on the likely view(s) from ground floor rooms that are normally occupied during daylight hours, or from within the curtilage of these properties.
- 6.18 On the north side of the main A487 opposite the Site, there are several residential properties which face onto the road. These properties, together with the Bayview Stores and Post Office, are served by a short, paved access road running parallel to the eastbound carriageway. Some of these properties have tall curtilage features, including mature hedges or fences, so the views obtainable from their ground floor windows and front curtilages are restricted. The north-eastern boundary of the Site is located approximately 30 metres from the front curtilages of these properties. Residents here will have direct close-range views of the Site. Such a view is illustrated in the photograph at **Appendix Figure JCA/05, Viewpoint 2**. It is notable that there is hardly any view of the sea or cliff coast because of the intervening hedgebanks and the change in topography as the land falls away to the south and south-west. During the construction stage, there will be a *major adverse* magnitude of change for these *high* sensitivity visual receptors, resulting in a *major adverse* level of effect which would be *substantial*. At the end of construction, and when boundary and curtilage landscape treatments are fully established, there will be a *moderate* magnitude of change and a consequent reduction in the level of residual effect for this receptor to *major-moderate adverse* which would be *substantial*.
- 6.19 In the south-eastern section of the Bro Dawel residential area adjoining the north-western boundary of the Site, a block of four houses has rear elevations and rear garden curtilages which face onto the Site. These garden boundaries are separated from the north-western site boundary by a narrow, paved access road which serves gardens and the rear accesses to properties aligned along the south-western edge of Bro Dawel. In addition, there is an intermittent field boundary hedgebank with occasional trees which demarcates the north-western site boundary. Consequently, there are only occasional, glimpsed close-range views of parts of the Site from these properties. The view eastwards from the corner of the access

road is illustrated in the photograph at **Appendix Figure JCA/07, Viewpoint 4**. Again, it is notable that there is hardly any view of the sea or cliff coast from here because of the intervening hedgebanks and the change in topography as the land falls away to the south and south-west. During the construction stage, there will be a *moderate adverse* magnitude of change for these *high* sensitivity visual receptors, resulting in a *major-moderate adverse* level of effect which would be *substantial*. At the end of construction, and when boundary and curtilage landscape treatments are fully established, there will still be a *moderate* magnitude of change and a consequent *major-moderate adverse* level of residual effect for this receptor to which would be *substantial*.

- 6.20 There are no likely effects predicted for residential receptors at the western edge of the Maes yr Eglwys residential area because of tall close-boarded fences which demarcate the rear garden boundaries of those single-storey properties which back onto the Site. Other houses here have their gable ends facing the Site.

Public Rights of Way

- 6.21 The main public right of way visual receptors are the users of the nearby section of the Wales Coast Path. This promoted long-distance route runs along the cliff tops to the south-west, south, and south-east of the Site - refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/01: Site Location, Landscape Context & Viewpoint Locations**. The visual sensitivity of these footpath users is *high*, given the nationally-promoted status of the long-distance route and the national park context and the resultant expectations of the viewer.
- 6.22 The closest section of the Wales Coast Path lies around 0.34km to the south-east of the Site at a sharp corner where the route begins to descend into the Solva Valley from the edge of the cliffs. The view obtainable towards the Site is illustrated in the photograph at **Appendix Figure JCA/08, Viewpoint 5**. The intervening high hedgebanks combined with the difference in elevation between the Site (typically at around 63m AOD) and the Coast Path to the south of Upper Solva (55m AOD at Viewpoint 5) means that there are no views of the Site itself. During the construction stage, it is possible that there may be some views of parts of the roofs of the proposed two-storey properties and related construction activities. At most, there will be a *minor* magnitude of change in the view obtainable by these *high* sensitivity visual receptors, resulting in a *moderate-minor adverse* level of effect which would *not be substantial*. At the end of construction, and when boundary and curtilage landscape treatments are fully established, there will be a *negligible* magnitude of change and a consequent reduction in the level of residual effect for this receptor to, at most, *minor-negligible adverse* which would *not be substantial*.
- 6.23 The coastal slope land to the south-west has a gentler gradient. Users of the Coast Path have more open views to the north and north-east from that section of the Coast Path between Careg Lyfn and its intersection with the local public right of way footpath P102/23, where the adjacent field boundaries are demarcated by post and wire fences rather than hedgebanks. Such a view is illustrated in the photograph at **Appendix Figure JCA/09, Viewpoint 6**. Although the views are more open, the lattice of high hedgebanks separating the many small-medium sized field means that the buildings in Upper Solva are substantially screened from view. During the construction stage, it is possible that there may be some views of parts of the roofs of the proposed two-storey properties and related construction activities. At most, there will

be a *minor* magnitude of change in the view obtainable by these *high* sensitivity visual receptors, resulting in a *moderate-minor adverse* level of effect which would *not be substantial*. At the end of construction, and when boundary and curtilage landscape treatments are fully established, there will be a *negligible* magnitude of change and a consequent reduction in the level of residual effect for this receptor to, at most, *minor-negligible adverse* which would *not be substantial*.

- 6.24 The public right of way footpath P102/23, which links the A487 road near Llanunwas to the Wales Coast Path to the south-west of the Site, is around 0.42km distant at its closest point to the south-western boundary of the Site. Although this footpath traverses substantially open farmland, with a notable absence of trees of any significant stature, this route is flanked by continuous high hedgebanks for almost all of its length to the south of Llanunwas - refer to **Appendix: Illustrations, Figure JCA/02: Photograph C11 Landscape Context Photographs – Sheet 2**). A view towards the east-south-east is only obtainable at the intersection of the lane along which the footpath runs with farm access tracks perpendicular to the footpath. The view towards the Site is illustrated in the photograph at **Appendix, Figure JCA/10, Viewpoint 7**. The effect of the high hedgebank (c.1.8-2 metres) seen on the left of this view is such that no view towards the Site is obtainable. There will therefore be *no effect* on the views obtainable from this footpath route.

Designated Access Land

- 6.25 A narrow belt of cliff top land to the south and south-west of the Site is designated as Access Land under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. The boundary of the adjacent managed agricultural land at the edges of the Access Land is demarcated occasionally by post and wire fences and often by mature hedgebanks. Where there are hedgebanks, these are often sufficiently tall to prevent views towards the Site. Where there are post and wire fences, the small-medium scale nature of the agricultural fields on the coastal slopes means that the next field boundary inland is not far away. Combined with the difference in elevation between the Site (typically at around 63m AOD) and the cliff tops (typically at around 45m to 53m AOD), these factors result in no views of the Site from this Access Land. At most, some parts of the roofs of the proposed two-storey houses may be visible, but these will be seen against a backdrop of existing buildings at Upper Solva. Examples of these views can be seen in the photograph at **Appendix, Figure JCA/08, Viewpoint 5**, and at **Figure JCA/09, Viewpoint 6**.

Public Roads

- 6.26 There are largely open views into the Site at close range obtainable from the nearby A487 main road and its footways. There are glimpses of the sea on the southern horizon above nearby housing areas at Maes yr Eglwys and above the mature high hedgebank which forms the south-western boundary of the Site. These road users have been ascribed *medium* sensitivity, this being a major route through the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The oblique view into the Site from the westbound A487 footway near the existing field gateway into the Site is shown in the photograph at **Appendix Figure JCA/04, Viewpoint 1**. During the construction stage, there will be a *major adverse* magnitude of change for these *medium* sensitivity visual receptors, resulting in a *moderate adverse* level of effect. At the end of construction, the magnitude of change will remain as *moderate adverse*. When boundary and

curtilage planting is fully established, the magnitude of change in the view will reduce to *minor adverse*, with a consequential *minor adverse* level of residual effect which would *not be substantial*. The oblique view into the Site from the westbound A487 footway near the bus shelter at the edge of the Bro Dawel residential area is shown in the photograph at **Appendix Figure JCA/06, Viewpoint 3**. During the construction stage, there will be a *moderate adverse* magnitude of change for these *medium* sensitivity visual receptors, resulting in a *moderate-minor adverse* level of effect. At the end of construction, the magnitude of change will remain as *moderate adverse*. When boundary and curtilage planting is fully established, the magnitude of change in the view will reduce to *minor adverse*, with a consequential *minor adverse* level of residual effect which would *not be substantial*.

7. LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY

7.1 This section highlights the aspects of planning policy which are relevant to the landscape appraisal of the proposed development. There are also short commentaries on how the prospective development would relate to the policies. *[For more detail on the full range of planning policy relevant to this development, refer to the Planning Statement submitted in support of the application.]*

National Landscape Planning Related Policy

7.2 The national spatial planning policy framework is provided by *Future Wales – the National Plan 2040* (Future Wales) published in 2021. This sets out the Government’s economic, environmental, and social planning policies for Wales, promoting development that enhances wellbeing and quality of life.

JCA commentary on relationship of development to policy

The prospective development approach takes full account of this strategic policy. The site design has been informed by an appreciation of the context and character of the landscape within this part of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and its special qualities. The objective has been to minimise adverse effects and optimise the potential benefits to the local landscape character. A sustainable development can be achieved in landscape terms.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Local Development Plan 2 (end date 2031)³⁷

7.3 Policies of particular relevance to landscape matters at the proposed development site at Upper Solva are as follows:

‘Policy 8 Special Qualities⁵⁸ (Strategy Policy)

The special qualities of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park will be conserved and enhanced.

The priorities will be to ensure that:

a) The sense of remoteness and tranquillity is not lost and is wherever possible enhanced (see Policy 9).

b) The identity and character of towns and villages is not lost, through coalescence and ribboning of development or through the poor design and layout of development, and is wherever possible enhanced. The identification of Green Wedges will assist in achieving this priority.

³⁷ Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority; adopted September 2020

- c) The pattern and diversity of the landscape is protected and wherever possible enhanced (see Policy 14).*
 - d) The historic environment is protected and where possible enhanced.*
 - e) Development positively enhances the National Park's ecosystems and the components that underpin them. The protection and enhancement of links between sites or the creation of links where sites have become isolated is of particular importance (see Policy 10, Policy 11, Policy 12 and Policy 29).*
 - f) Development conserves and wherever possible enhances Geological Conservation Review sites or any other important geological resource (see Policy 12).*
 - g) Species and habitats are conserved and enhanced for their amenity, landscape and biodiversity value.*
 - h) The Welsh language remains an important component in the social, cultural and economic life of many communities in the Park (see Policy 13).*
 - i) Development of the undeveloped coast is avoided and sites within stretches of the developed coast are protected for uses that need a coastal location (see Policy 17, Policy 18, Policy 33) and Policy 38).*
 - j) The National Park's network of green infrastructure both new and existing is protected and enhanced (see Policy 10, Policy 11, Policy 12, and Policy 15).*
- In assessing the impact upon the special qualities of the National Park, matters of detail and cumulative impact will be given special consideration.'*³⁸

JCA commentary on the relationship of the proposed development to this policy:

Development of the Site, as proposed, would be in line with this policy. Criterion b) is met by this being a proposed development adjacent to the existing edge of Upper Solva, on a site which is more akin to the existing settlement than the open countryside nearby. The development lies within the existing field pattern and retains, conserves, and rehabilitates distinctive local hedgebanks boundary features, so is in accordance with Criterion c). There would be no effects on the visual settings of the Solva Conservation Area, nearby Listed Buildings, and a Scheduled Monument, nor on the St.David's Registered Historic Landscape thereby complying with Criterion d).

'Policy 14 Conservation and enhancement of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Development will not be permitted where this would have an unacceptable adverse effect on the qualities and special landscape and seascape character of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park including locally distinctive characteristics by:

- a) causing visual intrusion; and/or,*
- b) introducing or intensifying a use which is incompatible with its location; and/or*
- c) failing to harmonise with, or enhance the landform, landscape and seascape character of the National Park; and/or*
- d) losing or failing to incorporate important traditional features.*

*In assessing the impact upon the National Park, matters of detail and cumulative impact will be given special consideration.'*³⁹

JCA commentary on the relationship of the proposed development to this policy:

The Site lies adjacent to the existing edge of Upper Solva, with residential land uses on three sides, so further residential use is compatible with this location. A detailed landscape and visual appraisal has been carried out and has concluded that the proposed development

³⁸ PCNPA LDP2 op.cit., p.50

³⁹ Ibid., p.61

would not constitute a substantial landscape change nor would it be visually intrusive. The Site is contained within the original field pattern and is contained by existing boundary features. The proposed development would have no unacceptable effects upon the local landscape character. The existing traditional boundary hedgebanks would be substantially retained, conserved, and enhanced, wherever practicable. There will be no substantial adverse effects on the existing boundary vegetation.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 An LVA has been carried out of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development to construct 17 dwellings on land adjacent to Bro Dawel in Upper Solva. This study has been carried out in accordance with the general principles of nationally agreed 'best practice' standards of landscape and visual assessment. It has involved an examination of various published data about the Site, including maps, aerial photographs, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Landscape Character Assessment, published Supplementary Planning Guidance, and planning background information. A highly experienced Chartered Landscape Architect with previous knowledge of the Pembrokeshire Coast landscape has carried out a detailed inspection of the Site, and its surrounding landscape, looking at its present condition and at the likely effects predicted to arise from the development as envisaged and with appropriate suggested mitigation measures implemented in full. This work has also been reviewed by a very experienced Chartered Landscape Architect with a working knowledge of the Pembrokeshire landscape.
- 8.2 Likely landscape and visual effects have been assessed, taking into account the construction stage, immediately after construction, and when the proposed mitigation planting has become fully established. The Appraisal does take account of the full range of appropriate mitigation measures which are being considered.
- 8.3 The LVA of the proposed development has evolved out of a proper understanding of landscape character, referring in detail to both published LANDMAP and National Landscape Character Areas, and Supplementary Planning Guidance. The proposed siting and layout of the new dwellings would ensure that the development does not compromise the existing pattern of built form in Upper Solva and is sensitive to the defining landscape characteristics of the local area and the special qualities of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park. The proposed development would be at a small to medium scale, with a landscape treatment which would reinforce this effect, thus locally enhancing the setting of the Site and enhancing the sense of place.
- 8.4 There will be local negligible changes to the topography of this site.
- 8.5 The retention, conservation, and enhancement of existing boundary landscape features wherever practicable is an important feature of the proposed landscape and visual mitigation. A landscape framework of retained and appropriately managed hedgebanks and a limited amount of appropriate new tree and shrub planting will help to visually contain the development within the immediate site environs and to help to assimilate it into the wider local landscape with an enhanced sense of place.

- 8.6 Residential receptors are amongst the most sensitive to visual effects. There would be *substantial residual visual effects on a few houses overlooking the Site at close range*: properties set along the north side of the A487, and at the south-eastern edge of Bro Dawel.
- 8.7 There would be *no substantial residual effects* predicted on the views obtainable by road users in the vicinity.
- 8.8 There would be *no substantial residual adverse visual effects* on the amenity of the users of that section of the Wales Coast Path in the vicinity. There would be no effects on the views obtainable by the users of other local public rights of way.
- 8.9 There would be *no effects on the visual settings* of the two nearest Listed Buildings, both of which are more than 100 metres distant and separated by intervening landform and vegetation. There would be *no effects on the visual setting* of the Solva Conservation Area. There would be *no effects on the visual setting* of the promontory hillfort south of Solva harbour which is a Scheduled Monument. There would be no effects on the visual setting of the St.David's Registered Historic Landscape.
- 8.10 The overall conclusion is that this prospective development proposal complies with the raft of applicable national, regional, and local planning policies related to the landscape and that the development is sustainable in landscape terms.