



Dol Y Dintir, Cardigan

**Landscape and Visual
Appraisal**

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On behalf of:
**Wales & West Housing
Association**

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Executive Summary

- S1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been prepared by The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP), on behalf of Wales & West Housing Association, to inform planning proposals for residential development at Dol Y Dintir, Cardigan.
- S2 EDP is an independent environmental consultancy and Registered Practice of the Landscape Institute specialising in the assessment of developments at all scales across the UK.
- S3 This report has summarised the findings of a comprehensive landscape data trawl and field appraisal undertaken by EDP's landscape team (**Sections 2,3,4** and **5**). In **Section 6**, the proposed development is described with any proposed mitigation. In short, the site comprises a large single field parcel of open pasture with strong boundary vegetation features. Development seeks planning approval for 51 affordable units with associated highways, open space, and areas of play. **Section 7** undertakes an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects having regard to the above and based on a combination of the thresholds set out in **Appendix EDP 2** coupled with professional judgement.
- S4 The following effects are likely:
- The character of the site itself is deemed low sensitivity though will be subject to large change. Its greenfield character and use as arable/pastureland will alter to accommodate new affordable housing. This is not an indication of bad design, or an inappropriate site. Instead, it is the inevitable result of introducing housing into what is currently a green field parcel;
 - The character of the site's immediate context and surroundings (medium sensitivity) will undergo very little change, post-development. The site forms a small part of the wider area, in what is an integrated part of Cardigan's existing footprint. The development on-site isn't uncommon nearby and residential development neighbours the site on two of its boundaries;
 - In visual amenity terms, users of nearby designated routes such as Public Rights of Way (PRoW) will experience very little change. Although these are typically of a high sensitivity, there are very few routes near to the site, where change will be clear to see. The enclosure provided by the boundaries on all four sides of the site will ensure that most views from these routes are intercepted. Views from routes further afield (to the west) are more direct and rooflines are more likely to be seen as an extension to Cardigan (see **Photoviewpoint EDP 7**), though the intervening distance contextualises the scale of the change;
 - The greatest visual impact on road users is likely to occur along New Mill Road, which align the site's southern and eastern boundaries. Where hedgerows/banks are lower in height, views into the site will be more available. See the Zone of Primary Visibility (ZPV) within **Plan EDP 6**;

- Nearby residential receptors (along New Mill Road and Heol-Y-Wern) may experience glimpsed views of the development during the winter months. Additionally, in places, development may protrude above the level of the field boundary vegetation. These changes, however, will be a small proportion of each view and are much less available during the summer months; and
- Beyond the adverse effects brought about by the development, are the mitigation and enhancements measures in place. The scheme brings about many positives in landscape terms to the character and use of the site. Although there is large change to the character of the site, new landscape features such as attenuation ponds, local areas of play, ornamental and native planting help to balance this change. The site will be used and enjoyed by more people, given it is a private enclosure as it stands. New planting will create habitats for wildlife and add to those already in place, within areas of open space. The proposals aim to retain the site's most valuable features and enhance them, including the large boundary features.

S5 To conclude, having assessed the appropriateness of the proposals in landscape terms, within this setting, it is demonstrated that the development can be accommodated within this site. By including additional planting and infilling around the site's boundaries, it can be further hidden from its surroundings, in what is already a well contained site. Overall, the proposed development would not constitute an unacceptable impact in landscape and visual terms.

Section 1

Introduction, Purpose and Methodology

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd (EDP) has been commissioned by Wales & West Housing Association ('the applicant') to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) of proposals at Dol Y Dintir, Cardigan ('the site'). The site falls within Ceredigion County Council Local Development Plan (LDP) area, extends to approximately 1.9 hectares (ha), and is briefly described in **Section 2** of this LVA. Full site details are given in the Design and Access Statement (DAS) accompanying the planning application.
- 1.2 EDP is an independent environmental planning consultancy with offices in Cirencester, Cheltenham and Cardiff. 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 Institute⁽¹⁾ specialising in the assessment of the effects of proposed development on the landscape.
- 1.3 This LVA is part of a suite of documents accompanying a full planning application for the proposed development summarised in **Section 6** of this LVA. The proposed development is for the construction of 51 dwellings within this 1.9ha site. The proposed dwellings would comprise 100% 'social rented' dwellings, constituting affordable housing as defined by Technical Advice Note 2: Planning and Affordable Housing (June 2006).
- 1.4 The development is being designed to cater for a specific housing need that has been identified by Ceredigion County Council's Strategic Housing Delivery Manager. The scheme will include local areas of play, adjacent open space and attenuation features to meet the SuDs Approval Body (SAB) requirements. The proposals are illustrated on the site planning layout at **Appendix EDP 1**.

PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THIS LVA

- 1.5 The purpose of this LVA is to identify the baseline conditions of the site and surrounding area and to determine those landscape and visual characteristics that might inform the design of the development proposals, including recommendations for mitigation. It then provides an assessment of the landscape and visual effects predicted to arise from development on the site with reference to the baseline analysis.
- 1.6 In undertaking the assessment described in this LVA, EDP has:
 - Undertaken a thorough data trawl of relevant designations and background documents, described in **Section 3**;

¹ LI Practice Number 1010

- Assessed the existing (baseline) condition and character of the site and its setting, described in **Section 4**;
- Assessed the existing visual (baseline) context, especially any key views to and from the site (**Section 5**). The establishment of baseline landscape and visual conditions, when evaluated against the proposed development, allow the identification and evaluation of landscape effects later in the LVA at **Section 7**;
- Described the landscape aspects of the proposed development that may influence any landscape or visual effects (**Section 6**);
- In **Section 7**, assessed the landscape and visual effects in accordance with the approach described below;
- Reached overall conclusions in **Section 8**; and
- Provided an analysis of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed scheme, which is determined by combining the magnitude of the predicted change with the assessed sensitivity of the identified receptors. The nature of any predicted effects is also identified (i.e. positive/negative, permanent/reversible).

METHODOLOGY ADOPTED FOR THE ASSESSMENT

- 1.7 The proposed development assessed by this LVA is not subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This LVA has, therefore, been undertaken in accordance with the principles embodied in 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – Third Edition (LI/IEMA, 2013)' (GLVIA3) and other best practice guidance insofar as it is relevant to non-EIA schemes.
- 1.8 **Familiarisation:** EDP's study has included reviews of aerial photographs, web searches, LPA publications and landscape character assessments. EDP has also obtained, where possible, information about relevant landscape and other designations such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), conservation areas and parks and gardens listed on Historic England's 'Register of Historic Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England' (RPG).
- 1.9 **Consultation:** Consultation has taken place with council officers in July 2023 regarding the selection of viewpoints. These were agreed and an additional consideration was sought regarding Cardigan Castle, in relation to the arising effects of the development site.
- 1.10 **Field Assessment:** EDP has undertaken a comprehensive field assessment 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. The field assessment was undertaken by a qualified and chartered landscape architect in good weather conditions on 03 August 2023.
- 1.11 **Acknowledgement of any shortcomings:** The viewpoint photography was taken outside of the 'wintertime' views window, though this is not a formal requirement within best practice guidance.

- 1.12 **Design Inputs:** EDP's field assessment has informed a process whereby the development proposals have been refined to avoid, minimise or compensate for landscape effects. Such measures are summarised in **Section 6**.
- 1.13 **Assessment Methodology:** Predicted effects on the landscape resource arising from the proposed development (as detailed in **Section 7** of this LVA) have been determined in accordance with the principles embedded within published best practice guidance insofar as the assessment adopts the following well-established, structured approach:
- Likely effects on landscape character and visual amenity are dealt with separately;
 - The assessment of likely effects is reached using a structured methodology for defining sensitivity, magnitude and significance which is contained as **Appendix EDP 2**. This framework is combined with professional judgement. Professional judgement is an important part of the assessment process; it is neither 'pro' nor 'anti' development but acknowledges that development may result in beneficial change as well as landscape harm;
 - As advised in GLVIA3, the appraisal takes into account the effects of any proposed mitigation; and
 - Typically, a 15-year time horizon is used as the basis for conclusions about the residual levels of effect. Fifteen years is a well-established and accepted compromise between assessing the shorter-term effects (which may often be rather 'raw' before any proposed mitigation has had time to take effect) and an excessively long time period.

STUDY AREA

- 1.14 To establish the baseline and potential limit of material effects, the study area has been considered at two geographical scales:
- First, a broad 'study area' was adopted, the extent of which is illustrated on **Plan EDP 1** and extends to 3km from the site. Based mainly on desk-based study, this broad study area allowed the geographical scope of the assessment to be defined based on the extent of views to/from the site, extent of landscape effects and the site's environmental planning context; and
 - Second, following initial analysis and subsequent fieldwork, the broad study area was refined down to the land that is most likely to experience landscape effects. The extent of this detailed study area is 1km from the site boundary, although occasional reference may be made to features beyond this area where appropriate. This detailed study area is illustrated on **Plan EDP 2**.

Section 2 The Site

- 2.1 **Plan EDP 1** illustrates the location of the site's boundaries and the study area for the LVA. The site is located to the north-east of the North Park Estate and the west of New Mill Road, Ceredigion, and is within Ceredigion County Council's planning control.
- 2.2 The site's character and local context is illustrated on the aerial photograph contained as **Plan EDP 2**.

EDP SITE ASSESSMENT

- 2.3 Site visits have taken place in August 2023, in good weather conditions. The visits were complemented by a review of aerial photography, mapping and field assessments from publicly accessible locations (e.g. from local roads and Public Rights of Way (PRoW)).
- 2.4 The site, found just off the busy A487, is accessed from New Mill Road. The route is also used to access several residential and agricultural properties further north.
- 2.5 The site, which is predominantly an open field parcel with boundary vegetation, is located between New Mill Road and the existing residential built form of the North Park Estate.
- 2.6 The topographic qualities of the site consist of rolling landform. A gentle east to west decline facilitates filtered views west, over Cardigan, where the site's boundary vegetation allows. The north-west of the site is the low point, as the landform gently rises towards the south and meets New Mill Road at its boundary.
- 2.7 The site is well enclosed by its boundary vegetation. Views in are mainly limited due to the mature vegetation on every edge. The lowest (c.3m in height, as per RTAC's tree report) of which is found at the south-eastern corner, where views from New Mill Road are clear and uninterrupted. Its current use, as predominantly grazing land has kept the grass short across the expanse of the field. A small single tree stands in the centre of the otherwise open parcel. Overhead telephone lines which run north-west to south-east are detractors within the landscape and are distinct features when viewed from near and far.



Image EDP 2.1: View from immediately south-east of the site (along New Mill Lane), overlooking boundary hedgerows and into the site. Overhead telephone cables influence the appearance of the site.

- 2.8 Habitats, aside from the site's use as grazing land, are limited to the peripheries of the field, where mature hedgerows and trees (of mostly native species) are found. These are likely to support a range of wildlife, though the Ecological Appraisal report (prepared by I&G Ecological Consulting) will offer more detail on this aspect. There were no watercourses recorded on or immediately near the site.
- 2.9 The site's historical value appears limited. It appears to have been used as predominantly grazing land indefinitely, apart from a short spell during 2018 where it was used as arable farmland for crop production.
- 2.10 Culturally, the site is also without any local connections or recreational uses.
- 2.11 The site is heavily influenced by the busy A487 which runs to the south and is only 20m away from the site boundary at its closest point. It is however separated by a native hedgerow, however, the road noise of constant traffic has influence on the user. Access (private) to the site is found from New Mill Road and includes a steep fall from the roadside into the field, which is the only access point.

Section 3 Findings of EDP Data Trawl

- 3.1 The findings of EDP's data trawl of relevant landscape, environmental and planning designations are illustrated on **Plans EDP 3** and **4** and summarised in this section.

BACKGROUND PUBLISHED EVIDENCE BASE DOCUMENTS

- 3.2 The following documents are relevant and will be discussed as appropriate later in this report:
- LDP Ceredigion Local Development Plan 2007-2022 (Adopted, April 2013);
 - Ceredigion Local Development Plan 2007 – 2022, Supplementary Planning Guidance Built Environment and Design (January 2015); and
 - Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Management Plan 2020-2024 (December 2019).

FINDINGS OF EDP DATA TRAWL

Landscape-related Designations and Other Considerations

- 3.3 Landscape-related designations and policy considerations within 2km of the site are shown on **Plan EDP 3**. In summary:
- National landscape designations: The site does not lie within a nationally designated landscape;
 - Local landscape designations: The site does not lie within a nationally designated landscape; and
 - Other landscape-related designations: The site does not lie within Green Belt/Strategic Wedge/Green Wedge/Important Local Gap etc.

Heritage Matters

- 3.4 Conservation Areas (CAs), Scheduled Monuments (SM), Listed Buildings and RPG are all heritage assets that can contribute to the landscape character and perceptual qualities of a landscape.
- 3.5 CAs are a local non-statutory designation covering places of special architectural or historic interest. There are three CAs set within the broad study area and one SM is situated in the CA, close to the site. The Cardigan Castle SM is located approximately 1.5km to the south-west of the site at its closest point, where the CA is made up of a cluster of Grade I and II listed buildings. The town of Cardigan sits on locally lower ground and creates a strong sense of place within the building group of medieval architecture. Naturally, the change in level and the wooded boundary between the two creates separation between the site and the

towns core. There is a cluster of heritage assets predominately found nearby and within this CA:

- Cardigan Castle SM located to the south-west of the site, which is within Cardigan CA. Some of the castle remains are intact and the SM is freely accessible to the public through a pedestrian gate located on Castle Terrace;
- Cardigan Bridge SM and Cardigan Town Walls SM bear national importance for its potential to enhance our knowledge of medieval and post-medieval construction techniques and transportation systems;
- Baptist Chapel and its railings gates and gate piers are classified as Grade II* listed buildings, as one of the finest classical chapels of the area. No. 12 William Street Grade II listed building and the Baptist Chapel represent the townscape of the 18th century in William Street;
- The Guildhall and Markets Grade II* listed building is the first municipal buildings in Britain to follow Ruskin's precepts as set out in The Stones of Venice;
- Parish Church of Saint Mary Grade II* listed building is a church founded after 1110 by Gilbert de Clare as Benedictine priory, first unequivocally recorded in charter of the LordáRhys;
- Avondale Grade II* listed building which has the best surviving interior in Cardigan;
- No. 7 St Marys Street Grade II* being the best surviving of the townhouses built by gentry of Teifiside in Cardigan; and
- The War Memorial, Capel Mair, Broyan House, Graystone, Priory Terrace, Imperial House, Churchyard of Church of St. Mary, Angel Hotel, Old Stables, Highbury Hotel, Stanley House, Bath House Farm, Old Sail Loft, Black Lion Hotel, Ty Mawr, Bridge Warehouse, building groups in St Marys Street, High Street, Castle Street, Quay Street and Pendre are the Grade II listed buildings designated for their unique and distinctive historical, national, and architectural interest.

3.6 There is another CA located approximately 2.5km to the south-west of the site at its closest point. The Old Castle Farm SM and the Limekiln are situated to the south-west of the Old Castle as Grade II listed buildings, and they are the only heritage assets within this CA.

3.7 The last CA within the study area comprises a cluster of listed buildings and the St. Dogmaels Abbey SM, and is located 2.6km to the south-west of the site at its closest point. Below is a summary of the listed buildings predominately found near this CA:

- St. Dogmaels Abbey SM follows the usual claustral layout with the abbey church to the north, the cloister to the south with a west orientation to house the Abbot's apartments, the monk's refectory to the south and the sacristy, vestibule and chapter house to the east;

- Y Felin Grade II* listed building is the site of the medieval abbey mill as one of the best surviving water mills in Dyfed; and
- Tyrhedyn, Brynivor, Cannon House, and five buildings found in the David Street, Church Street and High Street are listed as Grade II buildings which are designated for their well-preserved historical character.

3.8 The heritage assets that are not situated adjacent to/within any of the CAs are dispersed and infrequent across the concerning study area. Those of interest to this report, which are typically found to the south-east and west of the site are:

- Treforgan Grade II* listed building, located approximately 1.2km to the south-east of the site;
- Plas Llangoedmore Grade II* listed building, located approximately 1.2km to the south-east of the site;
- Church of St Cynllo Grade II* listed building 2km to the south-east of the site;
- Albro Castle Grade II* listed building, located approximately 3km to the west of the site; and
- Bryn-y-Mor Grade II* listed building, located approximately 3.85km to the north-west of the site.

3.9 Heritage assets can influence the visual character of the landscape and enrich its historic value. This LVA addresses heritage assets only insofar as they are components of the wider contemporary landscape – not in terms of their significance and value as heritage assets, which is a matter addressed by a separate Heritage Assessment.

Ecology Matters

3.10 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Ancient Woodlands (AWs) are all Ecology related assets that can contribute to the landscape character and perceptual qualities of a landscape.

3.11 A separate Ecology Assessment (prepared by I&G Ecological Consultants) considers the ecological assets on the site and within the study area. The following designations that are relevant to the scope of this LVA are:

- Afon Teifi SSSI is a protected area located to the west of the site at a distance of approximately 1.2km at its closest point;
- Banc-y-Mwldan SSSI, located to the north-east of the site at a distance of approximately 1.2km at its closest point;
- Banc-y-Warren SSSI, located to the north-east of the site at a distance of approximately 1.6km at its closest point; and

- Aberarth - Carreg Wylan SSSI, located to the north-west of the site at a distance of approximately 2.5km at its closest point.

Public Access and Rights of Way

3.12 PRoW are illustrated on Ordnance Survey data available online and via the LPA website² (accessed February 2021).

3.13 There are no rights of way or public access permitted on the site. The PRoW network within the 2km detailed study area is dispersed and infrequent. The closest PRoW is a public footpath (78/47) which lies 50m from the northern edge of the site boundary. Other PRoW in the vicinity of the site are listed as follows:

- Bridleway (78/7) is located c.365m to the north of the site which begins at the watercourse and connects the New Mill Road and Verwing Road;
- Public footpath (78/12) is located 95m to the south-east of the site and connects A487 and Feidr Henffordd Road with a length of c.928m. Adjacent to this, along the route of the A487 are the pedestrian footways that align the road;
- Public footpaths (78/44) and (78/45) are located c.370m to the south-west of the site and on the sides of the A487; and
- Public footpath (78/13) is located c.560m to the south-west of the site and connects to the B4548 and Rhos Y Dre Street.

Adopted Local Plan (Published)

3.14 Ceredigion Local Development Plan 2007-2022 was adopted in 2013 and it includes overarching general development policies, to which the development proposals will be tested. Policies that are specific to the site in landscape and visual terms are:

- **Paragraph 5.6 in Section 5 Vision and Objectives:** *“From the Cambrian Mountains to Cardigan Bay, Ceredigion will remain a scenic and biodiversity rich county, committed to maintaining, enhancing and benefiting from its beautiful coastline, uplands and river valleys.”*
- **Objective 6 under Paragraph 5.7 in Section 5 Vision and Objectives:** *“To sustain and enhance a high-quality built environment which; allows for innovative design, reflects a sense of place, is easily accessible, useable, safe to live in and helps improve the health and wellbeing of its communities.”*
- **Policy DM10: Design and Landscaping:** *“All applications, other than for householder developments (see para 8.88), which will have an impact on the landscape should be supported by a landscaping scheme. The landscaping scheme should:*

² <https://www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/coast-countryside/public-rights-of-way/the-definitive-map-public-right-of-way-registers/rights-of-way-map/>

- *Demonstrate how the proposed development respects the natural contours of the landscape;*
- *Demonstrate how the proposed development respects and protects local and strategic views; Development Management Policies (DM Policies) Ceredigion Local Development Plan (2007 – 2022) Volume 1 155;*
- *Respect, retain and complement any existing positive natural features, landscapes, or other features on site;*
- *Identify trees, hedgerows, water courses and topographical features to be retained;*
- *Provide justification for circumstances where the removal/loss of existing trees, hedgerows, water courses and topographical features cannot be avoided and provides details of replacements;*
- *Provide details of any proposed new landscaping together with a phased programme of planting;*
- *Demonstrate that any proposed new planting includes plants and trees of mainly native species of local provenance and does not include any non-native invasive species within the landscaping;*
- *Ensure that selection of species and planting position of any trees allows for them to grow to their mature height without detriment to nearby buildings, services and other planting; and*
- *Provide permeable hard surface landscaping.”*

Supplementary Planning Guidance

3.15 The Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Built Environment and Design is one of a series of guidance notes which support the policies of the Local Development Plan (LDP). A review of Built Environment and Design SPG has been undertaken as part of this appraisal and the following guidance that relates to potential development on the appraisal site are as follows:

- *“Site planning: Landscape should always be planned in conjunction with the positioning of any buildings within and adjacent to the site, rather than as a means of filling in the gaps left over.*
- *Vehicular and pedestrian access to and within the site, should be incorporated in the design at an early stage. Planting should be to an appropriate scale for the space that it is in.*
- *What existing/ new green infrastructure can be incorporated into the design of the proposal to mitigate/ adapt to climate change effects.”*

Parc Cenedlaethol Arfordir Penfro/Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCAP)

- 3.16 The PCAP is located approximately 5km to the west of the site, at its closest point. Given that this is a nationally designated landscape with a very high sensitivity, this appraisal will review the special qualities of the National Park in **Section 4** and any visual connection with the site will be identified in **Section 5**.

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 that 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, at paragraph 4.22 et seq.

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 Wales³ (NRW). The site and its surroundings fall within NLCA 40, ‘Teifi Valley’. The NLCA is summarised as:

“The Teifi is the longest river in West Wales. It issues from the Teifi Pools on the adjacent Pumlimon upland area. It emerges into the Teifi Valley above the one of the most intact and ecologically important raised bog landscapes in the UK, Cors Caron. The river meanders gently but eventually becomes incised in places. Steeply incised wooded river banks, with gorse clad outcrops, hanging oak woodland, coniferous forests and quarries sit within the wider lowland landscape of the Teifi Valley. Unusually the tidal lower river extends into the thickly wooded, steep-sided Cilger ran Gorge. The river emerges and widens into an estuary at the town of Cardigan. It ultimately issues into the sea through a modest sized sandy bay between rocky headlands.

Historically the river has been a defensive line but today it is valued as an important habitat for water-dwelling species. The valley is predominantly rural and enclosed for agriculture. There are a wide variety of field sizes and areas with thick hedgerows, mainly enclosing pastures. The small towns of Tregaron, Lampeter, Llanybydder, Llandsysul, Newcastle Emlyn and the larger town of Cardigan lie along its course. Many of them grew up as bridging or defensive points, although their morphology varies a lot. There is a trend for painting cottages and terraces in varied and bright colours. The falls of Cenarth, famous for its salmon, attract visitors, as does the romantic ruin of Cilgerran Castle, painted by Turner. The river is one of the last places where the art of coracle-making is practiced.”

- 4.3 While the NLCA 40 is broadly representative of the site’s landscape context, it is likely to be too broad a scale to reliably inform an assessment of the suitability of the proposals in landscape terms on a site of this size. Therefore, the LANDMAP evaluations and local area assessments (where available) are discussed below.

³<https://naturalresources.wales/evidence-and-data/maps/nlca/?lang=en>

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 LCAs and more site-specific landscape assessment undertaken through field studies and site appraisal.
- 4.5 The landscape character of the site and the surrounding area is defined within the LANDMAP resource managed by National Resources Wales (NRW). LANDMAP is the national information system used to undertake an assessment of the landscape character at a local scale.
- 4.6 LANDMAP data is the key tool recommended for use in decision-making in relation to landscape character. Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Welsh Assembly Government, 2021) Section 6.3.20 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 digital mapping 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 LANDMAP ‘aspect areas’, as summarised in **Table EDP 4.1** below. Each LANDMAP theme/layer is described, assessed and assigned one of four overall grades of value: low, moderate, high or outstanding. Summary LANDMAP descriptions are provided on the NRW website.

Table EDP 4.1: LANDMAP Aspect Areas covering the site.

Aspect Area	Unique Area ID	Area Name/Classification	Evaluation
Geological Landscape	CRDGNGLO41	Rhyd-y-fuwch Lowland hills and valleys/Lowland glacial and fluvioglacial depositional terrain	Moderate
Landscape Habitat	CRDGNLH028	Cardigan grasslands Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/- Grassland and Marsh/- Improved Grassland	Moderate
Historic Landscape	CRDGNHL225	Cardigan Built environment/- Nucleated Settlement	Outstanding
Visual and Sensory	CRDGNVS525	Cardigan Bay Coastal Plateau Lowland/Rolling Lowland/- Open Rolling Lowland	Moderate
Cultural Landscape	CRDGNCLS082	Cardigan Bay Coastal Plateau Lowland/Rolling Lowland/- Open Rolling Lowland	-

- 4.10 The Geological Landscape aspect area covering the site is evaluated as ‘Moderate’. The justification for the evaluation is that there is *“No notable sites/landforms recorded, and geology presumed to be widespread”* and the landscape is *“Dominantly rural area with limited significant development”*. The site sits immediately adjacent to the Cardigan geological character area, which encompasses the majority of the settlement of Cardigan. This area is described as an *“area of intrusive urban development: few natural features remain”*.
- 4.11 The Landscape Habitat aspect area covering the site is evaluated as ‘Moderate’. The justification for the evaluation is that *“Although this area is mainly improved grassland there are some important habitats present, which in turn support a number of interesting flora and fauna and therefore this aspect area is on the boundary between high and moderate evaluation”*. The condition of aspect area covering the site is *“Unassessed”* and showing a trend of *“declining”*.
- 4.12 The Historic Landscape aspect area covering the site is evaluated as ‘Outstanding’. The justification for the evaluation is that the site itself is being *“A fine example of an historic town with many buildings surviving in good condition”* and *“This landscape and its individual components are generally in good condition”*.

- 4.13 The Visual and Sensory aspect area covering the site is evaluated as 'Moderate'. The justification for the evaluation is that there is a *"distinctive open expansive plateau, attractive but also degraded in parts"*. The condition of aspect area covering the site is *"fair"* because of the chance in discovering *"Degraded hedgebanks"* and *"Gorse growth & encroachment"* within the aspect area in which the *"Development intrusion/poorly integrated"*. The site, again, immediately abuts the boundary of Cardigan visual and sensory character area. This is of a moderate value and its description reads *"Distinctive historic core of settlement is preserved. More recent development and settlement expansion responds poorly to the character of the town"*. It also is of a *"declining"* trend.
- 4.14 The Cultural Landscape aspect area covering the site has not been evaluated overall however, it is evaluated to carry 'Moderate' value in the sense of place/local distinctiveness and scenic quality. The site bears 'High' value in the aspect of 'Character'. Regarding the feeling of Welsh national identity in the authority, *"Approximately 49% of people in the area identify as Welsh"* and *"Approximately 59% of people in the area speak Welsh"*.

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Management Plan 2020-2024

- 4.15 PCAP is situated within a distance of 5km to the site. The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority have prepared a management plan for the park and the special qualities of the park are listed in the management plan. The sections that are specific to the special qualities of the park, which are likely to be affected by the impact, are listed below:
- *"The Pembrokeshire Coast National Park is widely recognised as Britain's only predominantly coastal national park. The splendour of its coastline, the influence of the seascape, its spectacular scenery, and rugged, unspoilt beauty, provide a scenic quality which was recognised in its designation as a National Park along with the spectacle of the islands off the Pembrokeshire Coast.*
 - *There is a wealth of important habitat and species within the National Park. There is a strong interconnectivity between habitats in the Park and outside it, in particular in the remainder of Pembrokeshire.*
 - *Pembrokeshire has a rich and diverse culture which has been shaped down through the centuries by waves of invaders and settlers.*
 - *A sense of tranquillity and remoteness is also highly valued amongst visitors to the area. This can include dark skies, free from light pollution."*
- 4.16 The development on-site must fall in line with the objectives which are set out in the LDP that:
- *"To conserve, enhance and promote the historic environment of the National Park, its archaeological resource, historic buildings and landscapes, parks and gardens (Policy 8).*
 - *To conserve and enhance appropriate habitats and species within the National Park and where appropriate to protect and promote the geological resource (Policy 8, Policy 10, Policy 11, Policy 12).*

- *To conserve and enhance the special landscape and seascape character of the National Park (Policy 8 and Policy 14)."*

REVIEW OF SITE CIRCUMSTANCES AGAINST PUBLISHED DOCUMENTATION

- 4.17 The site overall is reflective of most character area descriptions. Specific similarities have been identified below, as well as differences between the site and its relevant aspect areas.
- 4.18 The geological description of the character is reflective of the site, whereby it states that *"Dominantly rural area with limited significant development"*. This is of course true for the specific landscape within the individual character area. However, no regard is given to the nearby context of the aspect area. This is a key point, given that the site sits immediately against the aspect area boundary. Significant built form and development occupies land to the south-west, which in-turn influences the character of the site.
- 4.19 The landscape habitat aspect area is reflective of the site conditions. The site appears to be intensively grazed, and from recent historic mapping (2018), the site was used for arable purposes. It is therefore in agreement with the LANDMAP description of the aspect area, stating that the majority of the area is improved grassland.
- 4.20 In historic landscape terms, the site features within the primary Cardigan aspect area. LANDMAP evaluated the 'Cardigan' aspect area as outstanding in historic landscape terms. However, the site contributes very little to this evaluation, given its rural setting and limited connection with the town. The heart of the town (and the features which importantly constitute the 'outstanding' evaluation) is separated by generational built form of different time periods, where the urban edge of Cardigan has expanded.
- 4.21 The site is not reflective of the evaluation listed for the visual and sensory aspect area. LANDMAP suggests that the area is a *"distinctive open expansive plateau"*. Whilst it is on the face of a steeply falling hill, the site itself is enclosed by mature boundary vegetation. Development on its south-western side intercept views from short range to the south. Hedge banks also contribute to the limited views experienced in and out of the site. A mature tree belt on the western boundary provides visual separation from the adjacent properties, though restricts the feeling of openness from within the site. The ridgeline running closely to the east curtails views out from the site across the eastern agricultural fields. The receptor is also impacted by the passing traffic along the nearby A487, which is heard, from within the site.

EDP'S SITE ASSESSMENT

- 4.22 EDP have undertaken a site visit in August 2023. The findings, in landscape character terms, are broken down below, into similar headings as above.

Physical Landscape

- 4.23 The findings of EDP's site assessment conclude that the site is undulating in nature. A general low point to the north-west of the site gradually rises and falls, until it reaches a high point in the south-eastern corner of the field parcel. The access road (New Mill Lane) sits

elevated in the landscape and wraps around the south-eastern boundary. In places, where boundary vegetation allows, there are temporary views into the site. This diminishes as you travel further north along New Mill Road, due to hedge banks and mature vegetation. The undulating landform is not limited to the site itself. It continues in most directions, though urban form and sprawling development break up the appearance of this. This character element of the site is perceived to be able to accommodate change without changing these characteristics fundamentally.

Visual and Sensory

- 4.24 The site's visual and sensory character is largely defined by its sloping topography and large boundary features. The field, currently used as grazing land, visually offers rolling landform, alongside large, mature, and native boundary vegetation. These boundary features eliminate the likelihood of any clear views in from the western settlement edge and also intercept views outwards, down the slope, towards Cardigan.
- 4.25 The A487, which closely passes the site hinders the tranquillity experienced when in the field, despite the hedge banks and hedgerows. Road traffic dominates the sound in what is otherwise an enclosed site.

Landscape Fabric and Habitats

- 4.26 The landscape habitat and features within the site include the improved grassland within its main body. Additionally, boundary vegetation provides opportunity for insects, nesting birds and bats to reside. The northern boundary offers similar enclosure and habitat potential to the remaining three sides of the field. The native species on-site offer opportunity to a range of wildlife to forage.
- 4.27 The site contains a variety of landscape features and densely vegetated boundaries. It is believed that with sensitive design, aiming to retain key features within the site, and to maximise the replacement of vegetation lost as a result of development and the construction phase, this landscape could accommodate change within its boundary. This is without detrimental effect to this character type.

Historic Landscape Character

- 4.28 The site is not identified to be of a particular historical value in itself, with no evidence of listed buildings, scheduled monuments or items of historical interest located within its boundary. In addition, any historical link with the old settlement of Cardigan appears to have been intercepted by the adjacent 'new town' and 'North Park Estate' development.
- 4.29 The listed buildings nearby to the site have been acknowledged. These are historic elements within the landscape, however, they should be seen as separate to that of the historic landscape character. The nearby conservation areas and scheduled monuments generally occur at a lower aOD to that of the site, and therefore when considered in combination with the dense boundary vegetation on-site, there is a negligible connection or potential for visual or landscape effects on these features.

Cultural Connections

- 4.30 The site is not identified to be of any cultural value in relation to being referenced in poetry, art or literature. There is a PRoW near to the northern boundary of the site, though this has no affiliation to the site in physical terms. Given the lack of access routes into the site, it is currently without any meaningful linkage to local green spaces or areas of recreation.
- 4.31 As such, the site is deemed able to accommodate change without detrimental effect upon the cultural character of the site or wider area. Instead, there lie opportunities for greater connectivity between rights of way and play spaces for nearby residents and the wider public alike.

INTERIM CONCLUSIONS: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Overall Sensitivity of the Site's Immediate and Wider Context

- 4.32 The site's immediate and wider context correlates reasonably well with those described within the LANDMAP assessment, for the most part. Many of the aspect area qualities are present, though the influence the built form of Cardigan has on these areas is downplayed. However, given the scenic qualities of the site context, in places, EDP concur with the evaluation of most aspect areas and feel the overall sensitivity of the site's immediate and wider context is **medium**. There are, however, differences when it comes to the landscape character of the site; these are discussed below.

Overall Sensitivity of the Site Character

- 4.33 In summary, some of site's qualities deviate from those of the LANDMAP aspect area descriptions; the enclosed nature of the site contradicts that described by the aspect area, which suggests it is an open landscape. The historical aspect area was evaluated as being outstanding due to the good condition of buildings, though the site contributes nothing to this evaluation. The site, in many cases is much more reflective of its neighbouring LANDMAP character areas in this respect.
- 4.34 The site contains limited geological features, aside from undulations and a sloping aspect from south-east to north-west. The site contains little to no cultural/recreational value, in that there are no publicly accessible routes upon it. In habitat terms, the majority of interest will be at the site's boundaries, where hedgerows and trees are present. The use of the field is currently as grazing land for farm animals.
- 4.35 From a sensory perspective, the site is relatively unremarkable within the landscape. It does not form a prominent, or important, part of the appreciation of the wider landscape, and is perceived as an enclosed parcel for the purposes of grazing and agricultural use, in close proximity to existing residential properties and the urban edge of Cardigan. It is influenced by the busy A487 road and the subsequent sprawling development to the south, particularly through noise.
- 4.36 The site contains detractors upon it such as overhead telecommunication lines and poles, which impact the character of the parcel.

4.37 Given the points above, the site can be summarised as undesignated countryside with few distinctive landscape characteristics, amongst the presence of landscape detractors. A low value can be attributed to the site, alongside a low susceptibility to change, given the site's ability to accommodate large amounts of change, without altering its key characteristics, in landscape terms. The subsequent overall sensitivity of the site's landscape character is **low**.

Section 5

Existing (Baseline) Conditions: Visual Amenity

INTRODUCTION

- 5.1 Visual amenity (as opposed to ‘visual character’ described in the previous section) is not about the visual appearance of the site, but has to do with the number, distribution and character of views towards, from or within the site. An analysis of visual amenity allows conclusions to be reached about who may experience visual change, from where and to what degree those views will be affected by the proposed development.
- 5.2 This section describes the existing views; changes to views wrought by the proposed development are analysed in **Section 6**. An analysis of existing views and the ‘receptors’ likely to experience visual change is conducted in three steps described in turn below:

STEP ONE: DEFINING ZONES OF THEORETICAL AND PRIMARY VISIBILITY

- 5.3 The starting point for an assessment of visual amenity is a computer-generated ‘zone of theoretical visibility’ (ZTV). The ZTV is derived using digital landform height data only and therefore it does not account for the screening effects of intervening buildings, structures or vegetation, but it does give a prediction of the areas that, theoretically, may be able to experience visual change; it thus provides the basis for more detailed field assessment.
- 5.4 The ZTV is then refined by walking and driving local roads, rights of way and other publicly accessible viewpoints to arrive at a more accurate, ‘field-tested’ zone of primary visibility (ZPV). The ZPV is where views of the proposed development would normally be close-ranging and open, whether in the public or private domain, on foot, cycling or in a vehicle. In this instance, the field assessment was undertaken by a chartered landscape architect on 03 August 2023 in clear weather conditions and therefore confidently predicts the extent of summertime views of the proposed development.
- 5.5 Beyond the ZPV lies a zone of visibility that is less open, being either partly-screened or filtered. Views from within this zone would include the proposal – it may not be immediately noticeable, but once recognised would be a perceptible addition to the view.
- 5.6 **Plan EDP 6** illustrates the findings of the visual appraisal from which it can be seen that the ZPV extends as follows:
- To the north and west, the ZPV extends only to the site boundary, given the enclosure imposed by the surrounding vegetation, and close board fences to the rear of the western properties; and
 - To the south, the ZPV extends outside of the site boundary, insofar as New Mill Road, where it borders the site. Lower levels of boundary vegetation, on hedgebanks, offer opportunity for road users and pedestrians to visually connect with the site. As the route travels around towards the east of the site, these views are still available until

the gated access point is found. Beyond this and further north, tall hedgerows/hedgerow trees prohibit clear views in.

- 5.7 The ZPV encompasses few receptor groups such as pedestrians and road users of New Mill Lane.
- 5.8 Note: ZTV is **NOT** illustrated.

STEP TWO: DEFINING RECEPTOR GROUPS

- 5.9 Within the ZPV and wider area, the people ('receptors') likely to experience visual change can be considered as falling into a number of discernible groups.

Rights of Way Users

Public Footpath 78/47

- 5.10 The route of Public Footpath 78/47 travels east-west, connecting the North Park estate to the residential and commercial properties off New Mill Road. The route is scenic and consists of a grassy pathway amongst overhead vegetation, before arriving in a larger expanse of green space, lined by the closed board fence of the adjacent property, off Heol Derw.



Image EDP 5.1: Public Footpath 78/47 intersecting with Heol Derw.

- 5.11 At its eastern end, the PRoW emerges at New Mill Road, adjacent to several rural properties. Views towards the site are extremely limited by intervening built form and vegetation. The route also sits lower than the site in the landscape and this therefore limits open views in,

with close board fences and tree belts acting as visual barriers. **Photoviewpoint EDP 1** represents a view from this designated route.

- 5.12 Further west (of Heol Derw) the route continues as a weaving woodland walk, through the North Park Estate (albeit whilst isolated from the residential setting). It eventually emerges at Heol Helyg where the path ends. The sensitivity attributed to this route is **high**.

Public Footpath 78/12

- 5.13 This way is found to the south-east of the site, c.85m from the application boundary at its closest point. It firstly shares its route with a lane, found off the A487, which is used to access a farm and residential property further east. The route then heads south, through a large area of whip planting before adjoining another field to the south. The route is elevated in the landscape and overlooks the site to an extent. The busy A487, however, lies between the viewpoint (shown as **Photoviewpoint EDP 2**) and the site. Large field boundary features also intervene in this view, further screening the site. The sensitivity of this route is **high**.

Bridleway 78/4/D

- 5.14 This bridleway is found c.1.35km to the north-east of the site, and passes by an active sand/gravel quarry. The route is undulating and heavily overgrown; as its designation suggests, it is mostly only suitable for those on horseback. The route contains densely vegetated boundaries at most points, offering very little opportunity for views out (and towards the site). A view from this way is represented by **Photoviewpoint EDP 4**. The sensitivity of this route is **medium**, given its lack of legibility and overgrown state.

Bridleway 78/7

- 5.15 This route is found c.375m to the north of the site. It broadly links a rural road off the B4548 to the farm and residential properties found along New Mill Road. The route travels along the hillside of a large and open expanse of countryside. Detractors nearby are present, such as telegraph poles, which desensitise the view somewhat, as well as the A487 which passes by to the south-east. The visual connection with the site is difficult to establish; it is partly screened by vegetation and the urban form of the residential rural properties to the north of the site. Within this view, streetlights from the local A road are visible, as well as those telegraph poles traversing the site. Further west, the immediate landform and vegetation within the view curtails the amount of built form visible from this bridleway. This route is attributed with a **high** sensitivity, despite the nearby detractors. Open views across Cardigan's countryside and town present an attractive route for receptors. **Photoviewpoint EDP 3** represents a view from this designated route.

Public Footpath 78/26

- 5.16 PRoW 78/26 forms part of a wider network of footways to the south of Cardigan centre. Large field boundaries offer limited visibility towards the settlement, however, as the viewpoint is at the northernmost point within the view, the site and its adjacent field (to the east) can be seen, from a great distance. **Photoviewpoint EDP 6** represents a view from this PRoW, which overlooks derelict farm buildings on the hillside. This detracts from the tranquillity and character of the PRoW. The site is located over 2km away, which contextualises the scale of the development parcel within the view. A **medium** sensitivity is

given to this PRoW. The derelict farm buildings immediately impact the quality of the view, though they only occur for a short distance, when walking the route.

- 5.17 **Plans EDP 2 and 6** illustrate the extent of the nearby rights of way.

Road Users

New Mill Road

- 5.18 New Mill Road is found off Aberystwyth Road (B4548) which travels east-west through Cardigan's New Town area. This winding semi-rural road leads to several residential properties, as well as a farm building to the north. It intersects with PRoW 78/47 50m north of the site. The section of road, for a short distance offers opportunity for views into the site, given the higher ground it sits upon, as well as the low boundary vegetation/hedge banks. **Plan EDP 6** illustrates how the Zone of Primary Visibility interacts with New Mill Road. Further north, the winding nature of the route, coupled with the intervening buildings, hedgerows and vegetation greatly reduce the opportunity for any visual connection with the site. The road is a low-speed rural road, and therefore its users experience some of the qualities of its surroundings. It therefore warrants a **medium** sensitivity.

A487

- 5.19 The A487, on a broad scale, is a major 'A' road, linking many towns along the western coastline of Wales. At its most southern point, it begins at Fishguard, before passing many coastal and inland towns, such as Newport, Cardigan, Aberaeron and Aberystwyth before it terminates at the A470 interchange, near Snowdonia National Park.
- 5.20 It passes by the site on its way through Cardigan's New Town area. At its nearest point it is a high speed, multi-lane highway. There are limited opportunities for road users to see into the site in its baseline state, given the intervening vegetation proposing a degree of separation. However, following development, it may be that upper storeys or rooflines may protrude above the height of this vegetation. The assessment of effects has been discussed further in **Section 7**. Road users (particularly on major/fast roads) are less sensitive than those on a rural, low speed alternative. Drivers are naturally focussed on the road, as opposed to the landscape passing them by, and therefore users of the A487 are given a **low** sensitivity.

Unnamed Road within Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

- 5.21 **Photoviewpoint EDP 8** represents a view from an unnamed road within the Pembrokeshire National Park. Its location is shown on **Plan EDP 6**. This is a rural road, with tall hedge banks on either side, which travels through agricultural pastureland. At certain points, it contains views over Cardigan (and the site) however, these views are generally from private land. Roadways however, are publicly accessible and this viewpoint has been sought to assess how change arising at the site, might effect a receptor from the national park. Typical of rural roads in the area, the adjacent hedge banks screen views in and out, for pedestrians and road users. The level at which they are viewed leaves little opportunity for effects on the receptor, despite the heightened sensitivity, being within a national park. Given the enclosure of the site, and the distance of the beholder, relative to the change arising, it is

anticipated that there will be little to no impact on users of the national park. Despite this, it is still attributed with a **high** sensitivity, due to its location being within the National Park.

Residential Dwellings/Groups

- 5.22 Views from private residential properties, although likely to be of high to very high sensitivity to changes in the view, are not protected by national planning guidance or local planning policy. Accordingly, changes to the character, 'quality' and nature of private views are not a material planning consideration in the determination of a planning application. However, they remain relevant to this review of the predicted extent and nature of visual change, so are reviewed briefly below, alongside their sensitivity to change.

Properties off New Mill Road

- 5.23 Circa seven residential properties lie off New Mill Road. The closest of which is found c.10m from the application boundary. These properties benefit from what feels like a semi-rural setting, though with a PRoW linkage and road access to the immediate settlement of Cardigan's North Park Estate. Given the site's densely vegetated northern and eastern boundaries, views into the site (in its baseline state) are unlikely. Views from upper windows may offer an elevated picture, though the influence of the intervening roadway and built form may desensitise the receptor group to change. Views likely to be experienced from this receptor group are semi-rural, with less formal highways and weaving lanes for access. These receptors are therefore attributed with a very high sensitivity.

Properties off Heol-Y-Wern

- 5.24 Circa 12 properties, found to the immediate west of the application boundary back on to the site's western tree belt. The main access is from Heol Derw, as opposed to New Mill Road, unlike the receptor group above. Views of the site from these properties may be present, albeit heavily filtered, particularly during the summer months, however, the dense tree belt screens immediate views from this receptor group. This residential group is made up of bungalow units and therefore will not experience any views from upper floors. They warrant a high sensitivity (and not very high, due to their more urban setting, within a formal estate).

STEP THREE: DEFINING REPRESENTATIVE VIEWPOINTS

- 5.25 Within the ZPV, there are clearly many individual points at which views towards the site are gained. EDP has selected a number of viewpoints that are considered representative of the nature of the views from each of the receptor groups. The selection of the representative viewpoints is based on the principle that the assessment needs to test the 'worst case' scenario, and in selecting these viewpoints, EDP has sought to include:

- A range of viewpoints from all points of the compass, north, south, east and west;
- A range of viewpoints from distances at close quarters at the site boundary and up to distant viewpoints at 4km and more from the site (such as within the national park); and