

11. Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment

11.1. Introduction

- 11.1.1. This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been prepared by Soltys Brewster Consulting to assess the likely significant effects of the Proposed Development on the landscape and visual resource of the defined 3km study area.
- 11.1.2. The Proposed Development is located within the local authority boundary of Neath Port Talbot and is contained within the Coed Darcy Strategic Development Area, (northern area). The Proposed Development will consist of mixed-use development including residential, education, commercial and public open space including a mix of informal greenways and formal play spaces. The Proposed Development is also to include associated highways infrastructure, including a new pedestrian footbridge across the railway line, drainage works, ecology and landscape mitigation, ground remediation and other engineering works.
- 11.1.3. This LVIA describes and evaluates the existing landscape character and visual amenity and assess the potential effects of the Proposed Development, including the effects of on the physical landscape and visual amenity within the study area, during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development.
- 11.1.4. This assessment considers the Proposed Development and associated infrastructure, and its wider relationship with the surrounding landscape to enable a thorough understanding of the setting, context, and the extent of visibility of the Proposed Development within the study area. This information provides a baseline of existing conditions against which the impacts of the Proposed Development can be assessed.
- 11.1.5. When assessing landscape as a potential opportunity or constraint, factors to be considered fall into two broad categories:
- Potential aspects and attributes of the land within the Site; and
 - The wider characteristics of the landscape surrounding the Site.
- 11.1.6. Both factors require the consideration of aspects such as the topography, land-use and landscape condition, quality, visibility and aesthetics. Together these aspects help in defining the sensitivity and robustness of the study area, and its capacity to accommodate development of a given scale, form, and appearance.
- 11.1.7. The assessments of landscape and visual effects, although connected, follow separate methodologies. Following the assessment of the landscape to identify potential changes in its character and perceived value, potential visual effects are assessed to identify changes arising from the Proposed Development

on the composition of available views, perception of change and overall effects on visual amenity experienced by potential sensitive receptors.

- 11.1.8. The methodology adopted for this assessment has been guided by the current 'best practice' guidance published by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact assessment 3rd Edition (2013), tailored to the scope of the development, available details and project constraints. The site assessment was undertaken in August 2021.

Previous Assessment

- 11.1.9. An Environmental Statement (*Coed Darcy Urban Village ES February 2005*) was submitted to NPTC in 2005. This included a Landscape and Visual Assessment.

11.2. Assessment Criteria & Methodology

- 11.2.1. The assessment was undertaken using a methodology developed by Soltys Brewster Consulting that follows an accepted approach derived from the current published 'best practice' guidance:

- Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition. Landscape Institute with the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (2013); and
- NRW Guidance Note 46, 'Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments, (LVIA), January 2021.

- 11.2.2. The guidance is not prescriptive but recognises that every project requires its own set of criteria and thresholds, tailored to suit local conditions, circumstances and the potential scale of impacts. In the case of this development at Coed Darcy, the approach followed recognises the specific attributes and scale of the project and distinctive characteristics within the study area.

- 11.2.3. The methodology for the LVIA, including criteria for determining sensitivity of receptors, magnitude, and significance of effects on landscape character and visual amenity, is outlined below. However, in accordance with the above guidance and current best practice, a less prescriptive approach was adopted by the LVIA through an emphasis on creating a narrative approach to describing the landscape and visual effects and the judgements made on the significance of any effects.

11.3. Baseline environment

- 11.3.1. This section of the LVIA establishes the baseline landscape and visual character of the Site and study area by drawing together existing desktop information such as maps, planning designations and historic references, verifying and expanding on this information through site survey.

The Site and Surrounding Area

- 11.3.2. The Site is predominantly brownfield land, subject to remediation following the removal of the former BP oil refinery and associated infrastructure. The topography within and adjacent to the Site is complex with rock exposures, steep man-made slopes often colonised by scrub and woodland, including a railway

cutting and a series of large platforms that offer potential for development. Existing commercial properties are located within the Darcy Business Park within the Site, to the east and to the south, accessed via Tank Farm Road. Residential development, constructed recently and forming Phases 1a and b, extends along a central ridge forming a high point enclosing much of the Site extending north. This housing is outside the Site boundary.

- 11.3.3. The Site is further enclosed to the south-east by the Gelli-bwch Hills, a series of steep-sided lowland hills, with a mosaic land cover of fields and wooded areas, rising prominently to form distinctive features above the lower Neath Valley and the adjacent coastal lowlands. Intervening lower-lying areas contain the small settlements including Llandarcy Village and Jersey Marine, with larger-scale commercial and light industrial developments beyond, including the Bay Studios, Amazon depot and the landmark Swansea University Bay Campus.
- 11.3.4. To the west of the Site, Crymlyn Bog forms an extensive area of lowland wetland, comprising a uniform cover of marshy grasses and reeds, with willow and birch scrub growth in places. The disused Glan-y-wern and Tennant Canals extend through this area. A landfill site is located to the south-west, rising above the adjacent low-lying areas.
- 11.3.5. Within the Site, and directly adjacent, are a number of water bodies of various sizes created as part of the former BP refinery site. Those towards the west of the Site create a natural visual link with Crymlyn Bog and provide some benefit to wildlife.
- 11.3.6. To the west of Crymlyn Bog, a mosaic of fields enclosed by well-treed hedges, rises up to more elevated areas, with scattered farmsteads and dwellings merging with the settlements of Llansamlet and Skewen. Beyond this intimate landscape, the distinct and more imposing upland areas of Kilvey Hill to the south-west and Mynydd Drumau to the north provide a sense of enclosure to the Site.
- 11.3.7. To the eastern edge of the study area lies the town of Neath. The town centre is a compact area of retail and dwellings, some significant stone buildings, including the historic castle, with newer developments rising-up the valley side further to the east. Along the river corridor, declining industrial and commercial uses mingle with a degraded pastoral agriculture. There are few dwellings and the landscape is predominantly open. Land-uses include small-scale docks, breakers yards, storage depots, recreational facilities, floodplain pasture, wetland vegetation, saltmarsh and scrub.

The Wider Study Area

Topography and Drainage

- 11.3.8. The majority of the landscape within the study area is lowland and lowland rolling hills and valleys formed by a number of streams feeding into, and the rivers Neath and Tawe which run through the study area to the sea, the River Tawe being just on the western edge of the study area. The lowland follows the course of the River Neath from the town of Neath to the sea in the south, along the coastline towards Swansea and north into the wetland areas of Crymlyn Bog and Pant-y-Sais. Within the study area to the north and east the land rises steeply up to uplands of Mynydd Drumau and Mynydd-y-Gaer respectively, both forming the southern edge of the South Wales Valleys.

River Corridors

- 11.3.9. The River Neath is located to the East and meets the sea to the South East of the Site, at its closest point it is approximately 0.5km from the Site boundary. The River Tawe is 2.5km to the West of the Site. Both rivers flow typically north to south through the study area.

Water Bodies

- 11.3.10. Beyond those on and directly adjacent to the Site, water bodies are largely limited to within the lowland floodplain landscape along the River Neath, the largest of which being the man-made 'metal box pond' adjacent to the Neath Canal and 'metal box' industrial building. There are also small, isolated ponds on the lower slopes of Mynydd Drumau and the Gelli-bwch Hills north of Jersey Marine. There is a small reservoir within the study area on Mynydd-y-Gaer near Ynysmaerdy.

Land Use

- 11.3.11. Land use across the study area is varied due to the topography but is typically either urban settlements or grazed agriculture. The lowland hills within the study area are largely divided up into farmsteads with mature hedgerows dividing the landscape into fields for grazing livestock, this is most notable on the hills to the west of Crymlyn Bog and on the Gelli-bwch Hills and lower slopes of Mynydd Drumau and Mynydd-y-Gaer. The higher plateaus of Mynydd Drumau and Mynydd-y-Gaer, the landscape is open and exposed without field boundaries, although again predominantly used for grazing. The lowland floodplains along the River Neath and Crymlyn Bog and Pant-y-Sais, due to their wet conditions, are largely left to nature with no formal use, Crymlyn Bog and Pant-y-Sais also being protected under a number of environmental designations.

Woodland Cover

- 11.3.12. Across the study area woodland cover is largely limited to the steeper slopes of the surrounding hills. The largest expanses of trees being on the southern slopes of Mynydd Drumau above Neath, the western slopes of Mynydd-y-Gaer above Briton Ferry and the slopes of the Gelli-bwch Hills around Jersey Marine and Earlswood. There are also large areas of woodland on the northern slopes of Kilvey Hill above Pentre-Chwyth and Kilvey Community Woodland, which run along the now disused Old Canal and railways line that are adjacent to the A4217. Across the rest of the study area there is a network of smaller wooded areas, largely within areas where mature hedgerows and bog have been unmanaged and been allowed to develop into small stands of woodland, and as screening along major road and rail transport corridors.

Settlements

- 11.3.13. Urban settlements are spread across the extent of the study area, their shapes typically being defined by the topography and nature of the landscape. In the south of the study area, along the coastline, the development is largely industrial, being a mix of modern and late 20th century developments such as Swansea University, Amazon depot and the Bay Studios, all of which are located to the west of the River Neath. To the east of the River Neath, lies the Baglan Power Station and adjacent post-industrial land.

Settlements such as Skewen, Neath and Briton Ferry within the study area are typically late 19th and early 20th century and follow the valley floors, above the floodplains of the River Neath, with more modern residential development spreading further up the valley slopes. As the land rises-up to more elevated areas to the west of the study area, the settlements including The Fairways, Trallwn and Cefn-Hengoed become smaller and less connected along with small farmstead scattered amongst the enclosed field structure. Further west and the settlements become the sprawling suburbs and industrial areas of northeast Swansea.

- 11.3.14. The closest settlements to the Site are Llandarcy village adjacent to the southern boundary and Skewen to the northeast only separated from the Site by the M4 corridor. Beyond the Site boundary, at approximately 1.6km to the southeast is Briton Ferry, and approximately 2.3km to the northeast is Neath and which is the closest town to the Site. Swansea city centre is approximately 3.2km to the southwest.

Transport Routes

- 11.3.15. A number of primary routes are located within the study area and are within proximity of the Site. The largest primary road through the study area is the M4 motorway which runs adjacent to the Site, including direct access between the two at junction 43. Junction 43 also provides access onto the second primary road through the study area, the A465 heading north east toward Neath and then on up the Neath Valley towards Merthyr Tydfil, which lies outside of the study area.
- 11.3.16. To the south of the Site, at a distance of approximately 0.6km, the A483 runs west from junction 42 of the M4 along the coast past Swansea University, the Bay Studios and the Amazon depot and on into Swansea city centre, which lies outside of the study area.
- 11.3.17. Smaller 'A' roads of note within the study area include the A48 between Lonlas and Pontarddulais outside the study area, the A474 between Neath and Briton Ferry, The A4217 between Llansamlet and Swansea City Centre (outside the study area), and the A4230 between Lonlas, Skewen and Aberdulais (outside the study area).
- 11.3.18. Within the study area there are also a number of 'B' roads, the closest being the B4290 running north south between the Neath Abbey, Skewen, passing the Site, the village of Llandarcy and through Jersey Marine. Another notable being the B4291 running north from Lonlas to Glais outside the study area.
- 11.3.19. There is also a network of minor roads across the study area connecting the different areas of the towns and smaller settlements including those beyond the study areas. The nearest of these to the Site are Heol Crymlyn and Bog Road running down the western edge of Crymlyn Bog.
- 11.3.20. There two train lines running through the study area splitting at Britton Ferry, one traveling further north through Neath and Skewen, and passing north of the Site before turning south towards Swansea City Centre. The second crosses the River Neath further south, passing through the Site itself, splitting it into two parcels before continuing west towards Llanelli. The closest stations to the Site are Peniel Green, Skewen and Briton Ferry, all being on the line into Swansea, Briton Ferry being on both lines.

- 11.3.21. There is a third railway line splitting from the other two running south down the western side of the River Neath to the industrial area on the coast to the south of the Site, although site assessment studies concluded that this line is no longer in use.

Public Rights of Way and National Cycle Routes

- 11.3.22. There are several Public Rights of Way (PRoW) within the study area, including footpaths, bridleways long distance routes and national cycle routes. This includes the Wales Coast Path that follows the coast between Swansea and the River Neath where it splits, giving users the choice of either following the coastline through Aberavon and Port Talbot or traveling further inland over the hills of Mynydd-y-Gaer and Mynydd Dinas. At its closest point the Wales Coast path is approximately 0.8km south of the Site.
- 11.3.23. National Cycle Route (NCR) 4, one of the two routes within the study area, also runs to the south of the Site, approximately 0.9km at its closest point, connecting Fishguard in the west with London, largely following the coastline through South Wales. The other is Route 47, again connecting Fishguard with Newport but following a route further inland passing through Neath within the study area.
- 11.3.24. The closest footpaths to the Site are approximately 250m to the northwest and follow Cwm Crymlyn, connecting Heol Crymlyn and Llwyn Brwydrau. There are no public rights of way within the Site.

Landscape Designations

- 11.3.25. A review of the relevant key statutory and non-statutory landscape classifications has been carried out as part of this LVIA. Landscape designations are one of the criteria that are considered when assessing the value of a landscape. All landscapes have some importance, particularly to those people who live and work in them or use them for leisure activities, so the qualitative evaluation of landscape is essentially a subjective matter.
- 11.3.26. Landscape designations provide an indication of the value that national and local government, plus other agencies, attached to various landscape types. Landscapes can be designated by statute, in order to conserve and enhance their natural beauty and are included in policies within Development Plans. There are no statutory designated landscapes within the 3 km study area.
- 11.3.27. Within the study area there are a range of national, regional, and local designations that have been identified as the key designations relevant to the landscape and visual character of this study area. These are described below and are illustrated in Figure 11.1.

Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance

- 11.3.28. Within the study area is the Ramsar wetland of Crymlyn Bog and Pant-y-Sais. This wetland sits directly adjacent to part of the western boundary of the Site. 'Crymlyn Bog comprises a floodplain-valley mire located within a lowland coastal context and is the most extensive wetland of its type in Wales. The mire features a complex mosaic of vegetation types, supporting examples of swamp, tall herb fen, fen meadow and carr communities. The Site supports an exceptionally wide range of rich and poor fen communities, some of which bear a close floristic affinity to certain floodplain mires in East Anglia. The

presence of significant areas of saw sedge *Cladium mariscus* swamp is notable in extensive stands of this uncommon vegetation type, occurring at only three other sites in Wales.'

- 11.3.29. Although the Ramsar wetland of Crymlyn Bog sits adjacent to the Site it will not be directly affected by the development. Any potential impacts on the wetland caused by the development will be explored within the Biodiversity chapter (refer to chapter 10 of the ES)

Registered Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

- 11.3.30. The Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales has been established, by Cadw/ICOMOS UK, to identify those sites that can be considered of importance within Wales based upon a clear set of criteria. There is one Registered Parks and Garden within the study area. Its location is shown in Figure 11.1 and a brief description is provided below.

- 11.3.31. Jersey Park. Located approximately 1.6km southeast of the Site in Briton Ferry. Jersey Park is an exceptionally well-preserved urban public park opened in 1925. Its original layout of formal and informal areas remains complete and includes sports facilities. Planting in the park is diverse and interesting, with an emphasis on evergreen trees and shrubs. The indicative visual envelope, refer to figure 11.3, indicates that there will be no visibility of the Proposed Development from this location and therefore the park is not considered further within this LVIA.

Open Access and Common Land

- 11.3.32. Within the study area there are two areas of Open Country within the study area, both located on areas of relatively higher ground. The larger of the two is located to the southwest of the Site on the southeast slopes of Kilvey Hill above Port Tennant. The smaller area is to the southeast on the small hill above the River Neath floodplain at Briton Ferry known as Giants Grave.

Conservation Areas

- 11.3.33. Within the study area there are two conservation areas. The first is Llandarcy Village conservation area within the NPTC boundary and sits directly adjacent to the Site along the southern boundary. The second is Llansamlet Village conservation area within the SCBC boundary and is around 1.6km northwest of the Site. The indicative visual envelope, figure 11.3, indicates that there will be no visibility of the Proposed Development from Llansamlet Village conservation area and therefore has not been considered further within this LVIA

Ancient Woodland

- 11.3.34. There are pockets of ancient woodland of various sizes spread across much of the study area. The largest of these areas of ancient woodland are on the slopes of Mynydd Drumau above Neath Abbey and Skewen to the north, and of Mynydd-y-Gaer above Briton Ferry and in smaller areas above Neath to the east. The smaller areas of ancient woodland are typically scattered across the rolling hills, the largest clusters being to the north around Birchgrove to the west of Mynydd Drumau, and to the south on the Gelli-bwch Hills, particularly the southern slopes above Jersey Marine. Within the Proposed

Development there is one small area of ancient woodland to the east of the retained lake within the Site and to the west of the railway line. Beyond this, the closest area of ancient woodland to the Site is around 100m east at its closest point beneath the flyovers of the M4 and A465 and down towards the Tennant Canal.

Baseline Landscape Character

LANDMAP Character Areas

- 11.3.35. In line with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Guidance Note 46, Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments 2021, within the 3km study area 25 LCAs have been identified based on LANDMAP aspect areas and have been used as the landscape character baseline for the assessment below. The Site is located within LCA 10: Gelli-bwch Works.
- 11.3.36. Existing baseline conditions within each of the 25 identified LCAs are described in detail in Appendix 11.1. The value for each identified LCA is summarised in table 11.1 below:

Table 11.1 – Summary of Landscape Character Areas

LCA ID	Name	Value
LCA 01	A465	Low
LCA 02	Afon Tawe	Medium
LCA 03	Baglan Bay Works	Medium
LCA 04	Clydach Valley	Medium
LCA 05	Coastal Dunes	High
LCA 06	Crymlyn	Medium
LCA 07	Crymlyn Bog	Outstanding
LCA 08	East of Glais	Medium
LCA 09	Gelli-bwch Hills	High
LCA 10	Gelli-bwch Works	Medium
LCA 11	Kilvey Hill	Medium
LCA 12	Land West of Jersey Road	Medium
LCA 13	M4	Low
LCA 14	Margam Sands / Aberavon Sands	High
LCA 15	Mynydd Dinas	High
LCA 16	Mynydd Drumau	High
LCA 17	Mynydd-y-Gaer / Cefn Morfudd	High
LCA 18	Neath	Medium
LCA 19	Penrhiwtyn & River Neath	High

LCA ID	Name	Value
LCA 20	Port Talbot / Sandfields Margam	Low
LCA 21	River Tawe	High
LCA 22	Swansea Bay	High
LCA 23	Swansea East	-
LCA 24	Tal-y-fedw	Medium
LCA 25	Tregof Village	Low

Baseline Visual Assessment

Indicative Visual Envelope

- 11.3.37. The Indicative Visual Envelope, Figure 11.3, indicates the areas where the Proposed Development will theoretically be visible from. The indicative Visual Envelope shows areas where all or part of the development will be visible from and is based on landform and surface features such as built form and vegetation.
- 11.3.38. From the indicative visual envelope, it can be seen that due to the undulating landscape around the Site and within the study area, that areas within 1.5km with visibility are limited largely to the lowland areas to the east and west of the Site, Penrhiwtyn and Crymlyn Bog respectively and areas of the north facing hillsides of the Gelli-bwch Hills to the south, where not screened by vegetation and built from.
- 11.3.39. In the wider study area between 1.5–3.0km the areas with views of the Site are largely limited to the higher ground of the surrounding hills including Mynydd Drumau to the north, Mynydd Dinas, Mynydd-y-Gaer and Cefn Morfudd to the east and to the west, Kilvey Hill.
- 11.3.40. Table 11.2 below includes the Landscape Character Areas that the Visual Envelope indicate will have theoretical visibility of the Proposed Development. It is these LCAs that have been assessed in detail, as in line with Natural Resources Wales (NRW) Guidance Note 46, Using LANDMAP in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments 2021.

Table 11.2 – Landscape Character Areas with Theoretical Visibility

LCA ID	Name	Value
LCA 01	A465	Low
LCA 07	Crymlyn Bog	Outstanding
LCA 09	Gelli-bwch Hills	High
LCA 10	Gelli-bwch Works	Medium
LCA 11	Kilvey Hill	Medium
LCA 15	Mynydd Dinas	High
LCA 16	Mynydd Drumau	High

LCA ID	Name	Value
LCA 17	Mynydd-y-Gaer / Cefn Morfudd	High
LCA 18	Neath	Medium
LCA 19	Penrhiwtyn & River Neath	High
LCA 24	Tal-y-fedw	Medium

- 11.3.41. The key receptor groups contained within the visual envelope are discussed below, with a view to establishing key locations for detailed field analysis and viewpoint assessment.

Receptor Groups

- 11.3.42. Residents of key settlements: This group is considered to be amongst the high sensitivity groups within the study area because they are static receptors that will experience views for long periods of time. However, sensitivity is limited in that views will be heavily influenced by man-made, urban elements. Of the key settlements within the study area only relatively small proportions of Skewen, Neath and Neath Abbey fall within the indicative visual envelope, this was confirmed through a preliminary field investigation.
- 11.3.43. Residents of small settlements and individual dwellings: This group is judged to be highly sensitive because they are static receptors that will experience views for long periods of time. Individual dwellings within the countryside may be historically located in order to take advantage of high-quality landscapes or views. There are a number of scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings within the landscape surrounding the Site, particularly to the west of the Site. However, the vegetation and topography enclosing surrounding properties and within the intervening landscape limits the degree of potential visibility from these dwellings. There is also the potential for some visibility from individual dwellings and small settlements to the east of the Site on the slopes of Mynydd-y-Gaer and within Briton Ferry, although again due to the distance, vegetation, and topography the degree of potential visibility is limited.
- 11.3.44. Recreational users include walkers on the network of surrounding footpaths and walkers along the long-distance trails that cut through the study area.
- 11.3.45. Visitors undertaking active outdoor recreation activities that are not directly associated with the enjoyment of scenery: This group is judged to have medium sensitivity because they are not always located in designated or highly scenic landscapes and their primary reason for being in the landscape is not the appreciation of its character and appearance. There will be a varied number of these receptors, including for example, users of the National Cycle Networks. Two National Cycle Routes cross within the study area, however they are located at distance with only limited areas of visibility highlighted on the indicative visual envelope and therefore receptors of this nature are considered likely to be limited.
- 11.3.46. Outdoor workers: This group of users is considered to be of medium sensitivity because they are mobile and will engage in active work. The quality of landscape and visual character will not influence their presence or length of stay but they are likely to spend prolonged periods of time outdoors and this time may be enhanced by scenic quality. They are most likely to include agricultural and forestry workers who will be located throughout the study area.

- 11.3.47. Users of indoor workplaces and community facilities: This group is judged to be of low sensitivity because they will spend only short periods of time in the landscape for reasons that are not related to or affected by landscape and visual quality. They will experience temporary or transitory views whilst engaged in other activities. This group of users may include churchgoers, customers at petrol stations and garages, public houses, leisure centres and other community facilities. They are most likely to be located within settlements and on the primary or secondary road networks and will occur in moderate to large numbers across the study area.

Viewpoint Selection

- 11.3.48. Four potential viewpoint locations were selected for review from within the 3km study area (refer to Figure 11.3). Selection was based on the outcome of the Zone of Visual Influence and site visit assessment work in order to find the most appropriate locations surrounding the Site. Viewpoint locations have been selected to represent a range of receptor types, including residents, road users, walkers and pedestrians.
- 11.3.49. Site photography was undertaken in August 2021, in dry weather conditions and during a period when visibility was considered typical for the time of year. The four viewpoints selected are shown in table 11.3 below:

Table 11.3 – Viewpoints

Viewpoint No.	Location	X Co-ordinate	Y Co-ordinate	Approximate Distance from Site Boundary (km)
1	Drumau Road, Skewen	271943	197775	1.13
2	Crymlyn Bog Car Park, Dinam Road, Bon-y-maen	268570	194206	1.83
3	Old Road/Wheathely Road, Neath	274562	195966	2.48
4	Crymlyn Gardens, Skewen	270849	196811	0.80

11.4. Relevant legislation, policy and guidance

Legislation and Policy Context

- 11.4.1. In line with the statutory requirements legislated by the Environmental Impact Assessment (Wales) Regulations 2017, a review of the relevant national and local key statutory and non-statutory landscape

planning designations and policies has been carried out as part of this assessment. These policies are detailed below.

Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy

11.4.2. *Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11, (February 2021)*. This document sets out land use planning policies of the Welsh Government and is the foundation of all national, regional and local planning policy. It is supplemented by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANs) and Guidance Notes (GNS), Welsh Government Circulars, and policy clarification letters, which together with PPW, provide the national planning policy framework for Wales. The primary objective of PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, PPW also recognises the rich and varied landscapes of Wales, covered by a hierarchy of statutory and non-statutory designations, including National Parks and AONB's. PPW also supports the use of the National Resources Wales (NRW) LANDMAP Information System as an important information resource to inform baseline landscape character assessment within Wales.

11.4.3. *Future Wales - The National Plan 2040 (February 2021)*. Future Wales builds on Planning Policy Wales and provides a national spatial strategy setting out where Wales should focus development to address key national priorities through the planning system until 2040. It provides the national tier and sets the direction for strategic and local development plans as well as complementing Planning Policy Wales (PPW) with a shared commitment to placemaking and towards national ambitions and well-being goals. Together, PPW and Future Wales set out how the planning system should respond to and address national challenges and opportunities.

Local Planning Policy

11.4.4. Landscape planning designations and policies indicate the value that national and local government, as well as statutory parties, attach to various landscapes of landscape features within a geographic area. The 3km study area includes areas within the county of Neath Port Talbot and the county of Swansea, this assessment will therefore consider the policies of both relevant Local Planning Authorities (LPA).

11.4.5. The following local designations within the study area will be considered within the LVIA and are indicated on *Figure 1: Landscape Designations Plan* and *Figure 2: Major Transport Routes and Public Rights of Way*.

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTC) Local Development Plan

11.4.6. A brief review of the key landscape relevant planning policy provisions for NPTC has been undertaken. Policy in Neath Port Talbot is defined by the Local Development Plan (LDP), as adopted 27th January 2016.

11.4.7. The key policy with relevance to landscape related issues within the NPTC LDP can be found below.

- Strategic Policy SP5 Development in the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area: 'In the Coastal Corridor Strategy Area, sustainable growth and development will be promoted to benefit the County Borough as a whole, while protecting and enhancing the area's character and environment.
- Policy SRA1 Coed Darcy Strategic Regeneration Area: 'A Strategic Regeneration Area is designated at Coed Darcy, Neath for the development of an urban village'.
- Strategic Policy SP13 Tourism: 'The economic prosperity of Neath Port Talbot will be promoted through encouraging controlled growth in the tourist sector by;

1. Encouraging high quality, sustainable tourism development;
2. Providing a flexible approach to the development and conversions to tourism facilities;
3. Resisting, where appropriate, proposals which would result in the loss of tourism facilities;
4. Supporting tourism proposals through the allocation of land for tourism development.'

- Policy TO4 Walking and Cycling Routes: 'Any proposal that would prevent or have any adverse impact on their implementation will be resisted.'

11.4.8. Strategic Policy SP14 The Countryside and the Undeveloped Coast: 'The countryside and undeveloped coast, including landscapes, seascapes and agricultural land, will be protected and where feasible enhanced through the following measures;

1. The protection of the open countryside through the control of inappropriate development outside settlement limits;
2. The protection of the undeveloped coast through the control of inappropriate development;
3. The designation and protection of Special Landscape Areas;
4. The designation and protection of green wedges.'

- Policy EN3 Green Wedges: 'In order to prevent the coalescence of settlements and to protect the setting of urban areas, Green Wedges have been designated'. 'Within these areas there is the presumption against inappropriate development.'
- Strategic Policy SP15 Biodiversity and Geodiversity: 'Important habitats, species and sites of geological interest will be protected, conserved, enhanced and managed through the following measures;

1. The identification of the following Internationally and Nationally designated sites within the County Borough to enable their protection;
 - a. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar Sites;

- b. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);
- c. National Nature Reserves (NNRs);
- 2. The identification and protection of sites of regional and local importance;
- 3. The protection of important natural heritage features.’
 - Strategic Policy SP21 Built Environment and Historic Heritage: ‘The built environment and historic heritage will, where appropriate, be conserved and enhanced through the following measures;
- 1. Encourage high quality design standards in all development proposals;
- 2. Protecting arterial gateways from intrusive and inappropriate development;
- 3. Safeguarding features of historic and cultural importance;
- 4. The identification of the following designated sites to enable their protection and where appropriate enhancement;
 - a. Landscapes of Historic Interest;
 - b. Historic Parks and Gardens;
 - c. Conservation Areas;
 - d. Scheduled Ancient Monuments; and
 - e. Listed Buildings and their curtilage.’

Swansea County Borough Council (SCBC) Local Development Plan

- 11.4.9. A brief review of the key landscape relevant planning policy provisions for SCBC has been undertaken. Policy in Swansea is defined by the Local Development Plan (LDP), as adopted 28th February 2019.
- 11.4.10. The key policy with relevance to landscape related issues within the SCBC LDP can be found below.
 - Policy HC1 Historic and Cultural Environment: ‘The county’s distinctive historic and cultural environment will be preserved or enhanced by;
- 1. Requiring high quality design standards in all development proposals to respond positively to local character and distinctiveness;
- 2. Identifying and safeguarding heritage assets, sites and their settings;
- 3. Supporting heritage and cultural led regeneration schemes; and

4. Safeguarding and promoting use of the Welsh language.

The designated heritage assets and sites referred to in the Policy include;

- Scheduled ancient monuments and archaeological sites
- Listed buildings and their curtilages
- Conservation areas
- Register of landscapes, parks and gardens of special historic interest in Wales.'
- Policy ER6 Designated Sites of Ecological Importance: 'Development will not be permitted that would result in a likely significant adverse effect on the integrity of sites of international or national nature conservation importance, except in circumstances specified in relevant legislation. Development that would adversely affect locally designated sites of nature conservation importance should maintain and enhance the nature conservation of the site.'
- Policy T7 Public Rights of Way and Recreational Routes: 'Development that significantly adversely affects the character, safety, enjoyment and convenient use of a PROW will only be permitted where an acceptable alternative route is identified and provided. Linkages, and where appropriate extensions, to the existing PROW network will be expected from all new developments, which must have regard to the existing character of the PROW and the aspirations to improve access for all.'

11.5. Inherent Design Mitigation

- 11.5.1. Mitigation measures are required in order to avoid, reduce, remedy or compensate for any potential significant adverse effects of the development. The principle of mitigation commences with the design of the development and is an iterative process, in that measures are taken, wherever possible, to adjust the design to minimise adverse effects. Additional mitigation measures to reduce the effects on landscape character and visual amenity includes the retention of existing vegetation, including the woodland block to the eastern and southern boundaries of the Site. The retained vegetation will be supplemented by proposed vegetation, most notably within northern and eastern parts of the Site, which will assist in reduce visual effects, from surrounding areas.

11.6. Likely Environmental Impacts & Effects

Assessment of Effects on Landscape Character

- 11.6.1. The significance of effects on landscape character will be determined by combining the sensitivity of the landscape receptors with the magnitude of landscape change that will occur within the Landscape Character Area (LCA). The criteria for informing the sensitivity, magnitude and the significance of effects on landscape character is provided below:

Assessing the Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors to Change

- 11.6.2. The sensitivity of landscape receptors to change is determined by combining judgements of the susceptibility of the LCA to the type of change or development proposed and the value attached to the landscape.

Value of Landscape Receptors

- 11.6.3. The value of each LCA is informed both by each of the five LANDMAP aspect areas and also by assessing other elements that may contribute to landscape value, such as:

- Landscapes that have been recognised by statutory designations, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
- Landscapes that have been designated at a local level, such as Special Landscape Areas
- Landscapes that include important heritage assets such Registered Park and Garden, Schedule Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas etc.
- Landscapes that are included in tourism literature or have cultural associations

- 11.6.4. The criteria for determining the value of each LCA are set out in the table 11.4 below:

Table 11.4 – Value of Landscape Receptors

Value of Landscape Receptors	Description
Outstanding	Landscapes, which are outstanding by nature of their scenic quality, which are aesthetically pleasing with a strong sense of place and may be rare in terms of their character type. They may also contain sites of historic, cultural, geological or natural habitat importance. These areas may be important tourist destinations and may be of national or international importance as defined by statutory designations.
High	Landscapes with scenes of picturesque quality, which are aesthetically pleasing. They may also contain rare or historic features, have some notable cultural association, important geological features or contain a large proportion of high-quality habitats (e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). These areas may be tourist destinations e.g. Historic Park and Garden and may be of regional or county importance as defined by statutory and local authority designations.

Value of Landscape Receptors	Description
Medium	Landscapes with picturesque attributes, which are aesthetically pleasing. Some characteristic features remain unaffected but others are fragmented and/or spoilt. The area may have some tourist associations, though tourism is not the primary attraction. Area may contain a network of habitats (e.g. Local Nature Reserve); historic or geological features. These areas may be of local importance as defined by local authority designations.
Low	Landscapes with limited aesthetically pleasing scenes. Few characteristics remain unaffected and may be highly fragmented or spoilt. Very little coherent character and a weak sense of place and are unlikely to be rare in terms of character type. They are unlikely to contain tourist attractions, or to be of local importance as defined by local authority designations.

Susceptibility to Change

- 11.6.5. The susceptibility of landscape receptors to the type of change or development proposed is described within GLVIA3 as “the ability of the landscape receptor (whether it be the overall character or quality/condition of a particular landscape type or area, or an individual element and/ or feature, or a particular aesthetic and perceptual aspect) to accommodate the Proposed Development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and/ or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies”¹. The relationship between the various landscape character components assists in defining if, and how development may be placed in the landscape. It also allows choices to be made on informing design, which will vary according to the characteristics of the receiving landscape.
- 11.6.6. The susceptibility to change of a given landscape is particular to both the specific landscape in question and the specific nature of Proposed Development². Susceptibility to change of the study area landscape and component Landscape Character Areas to development of the nature proposed is appraised within assessment. The range of factors considered includes:
- The nature of existing features within the landscape, including the presence or absence of existing commercial, residential or industrial developments.
 - Landscape pattern, land use, density, built form and scale of the landscape

¹ Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition’ (2013) Page 88, paragraph 5.40

² Landscape Institute / Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition’ (2013) Page 89, paragraph 5.42

- Landscape features, including vegetation cover and man-made features.
- Historic uses and the pattern of change within the landscape
- Stability, robustness and fragility of landscape attributes and ability to be restored
- The condition of the landscape, including the maintenance of individual elements such as hedgerows, buildings, woodland.
- The nature of the Proposed Development, its component parts and character
- The extent to which sensitive design consideration and mitigation limit the degree of change.

11.6.7. The criteria for determining the susceptibility of landscape receptors to change within each LCA are set out in the table 11.5 below:

Table 11.5 – Susceptibility of Landscape Receptors

Susceptibility of Landscape Receptors	Description
High	A landscape where the majority of attributes are unlikely to withstand change without causing a change to overall character to the extent that it will be difficult or impossible to restore. The frequency and sensitivity of landscape characteristics is also likely to be high.
Medium	A landscape with a combination of attributes that is capable of absorbing some degree of change without affecting overall character. There are less likely to be large numbers of sensitive landscape characteristics.
Low	A landscape where the majority of attributes are robust and/or tolerant of change to the extent that change or development will have little or no effect on overall character. It is likely to be easily restored and the frequency and sensitivity of landscape characteristics is likely to be low.

Sensitivity of Landscape

11.6.8. The consideration of value and susceptibility as outlined above enables an informed judgment to be made on the level of sensitivity to be apportioned to each defined LCA within the 3km study area on a sliding scale between Very High and Very Low, as outlined in the table 11.6 below:

Table 11.6 – Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors	Description
Very High	A landscape of outstanding or high value that may have key characteristics that will have a very high sensitivity to development of the size proposed. The landscape will be highly susceptible to change and is likely to be designated at an international or national level.
High	A landscape of high value that may have key characteristics that may have a high sensitivity to development of the size proposed. The landscape may be highly susceptible to change and is likely to be designated at a national or regional level
Medium	A landscape of medium value that will have a range of characteristics, with varying degrees of tolerances and sensitivities to development of the size proposed. The landscape will be of medium susceptibility to change and may be designated at a regional or local level.
Low	A landscape of medium or low value that may have key characteristics that will be tolerant of development of the size proposed. The landscape will have a low susceptibility to change and may be designated at a local level only.
Very Low	A landscape of low value that will have key characteristics that will be tolerant of development of the size proposed. The landscape will be of low susceptible to change and is unlikely to be designated.

Assessing the Magnitude of Landscape Change

11.6.9. The magnitude of change to landscape character is the degree of change that will result through the introduction of the Proposed Development. This will be dependent on a number of factors, including:

- The degree by which the elements that determine the landscape character of an area will be altered by the Proposed Development. Generally, the magnitude of change will be higher if existing elements that comprise the landscape are removed or significantly altered.
- The prominence of the development within the landscape. Broadly, the greater the prominence, the greater the magnitude of change.
- Whether effects are 'direct' or 'indirect'. A 'direct' effect can be described as an effect that will be attributed to the development, including both physical effects and visual effects. An 'indirect' effect can be defined as a secondary effect that cannot be directly attributed to the development, but arises as a consequence of it such as an effect on the setting of a particular landscape.

- The distance separating the development from a specifically identified landscape (or landscape character area). Generally, at greater distances away from the specified landscape the magnitude of change is lower.
- The duration and reversibility of the effects of the development and whether these are permanent or temporary.

11.6.10. The magnitude of change to landscape character is assessed using the criteria as described in table 11.7 below:

Table 11.7 – Magnitude of Landscape Change

Magnitude of Landscape Change	Description
Very High	The Proposed Development will result in substantial loss or major alteration to key elements of landscape character to the extent that there is a fundamental and permanent change to landscape character. The change may occur over an extensive area.
High	The Proposed Development will result in major loss or alteration to key elements of landscape character to the extent that there is a considerable change. The change may occur over a wide area and for a duration extending into the foreseeable future.
Medium	The Proposed Development will result in the loss or alteration to key elements of landscape character to the extent that there is a partial change to landscape character that may have a duration extending from the medium term or into the foreseeable future. The change may occur over a notable area.
Low	The Proposed Development will result in minor loss or alteration to key elements of landscape character to the extent that there is a slight change to landscape character. The change may be temporary or occur over a limited area.
Very Low	The Proposed Development will result in such a minor loss or alteration to key elements of landscape character that there will be no fundamental change.

Assessment of Significance

11.6.11. The significance of effects on landscape character is assessed using the appropriate national and international quality standards and professional judgement. For clarity and transparency, criteria have been used to attribute levels of significance. Broadly, the significance is a function of the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of receptors. The reversibility and duration of the effect are also important considerations.

- 11.6.12. For each assessment factor the sensitivity of the effect is combined with magnitude to give an overall score for the significance of the impact as described in the table 11.8 below:

Table 11.8 – Significance of Effects on Landscape Receptors

Significance of Effect on Landscape Receptors	Description
Major	The development will have significant effects upon key characteristics on a landscape likely to be evaluated as having a very high or high sensitivity to change. Effects are likely to be dominant over a wide extent of the LCA resulting in a fundamental and long-term change to landscape character. The development will become the defining landscape element.
Major-Moderate	The development may have notable effects upon key characteristics on a landscape likely to be evaluated as having a very high or high sensitivity to change. Effects may be prominent across significant areas of the LCA resulting in a considerable and long-term change to landscape character. The development may become a defining landscape element.
Moderate	The development may have some effects upon key characteristics on a landscape likely to be evaluated as being of medium sensitivity to change. Any effects will be limited in extent and the landscape character may be equally defined by both the development and other existing landscape attributes
Moderate-Minor	The development may have limited effects on the key characteristics on a landscape likely to be evaluated as having a low or very low sensitivity to change. Effects are unlikely to be affect a wide extent of the LCA. There will be no widely perceptible change to the existing landscape character.
Minor	The development will have very limited effects on the key characteristics on a landscape likely to be evaluated as having a low or very low sensitivity to change. Effects will not affect a wide extent of the LCA. There will be little or no change to landscape character.

- 11.6.13. Significant effects occur where the relationship of sensitivity and magnitude affect the character of the landscape to the degree that landscape character is subsequently defined or considerably influenced by the presence of the Proposed Development. These may equate, but not exclusively so, to those effects considered to be of Major or Major-Moderate significance. There may be effects that, when professional judgment is applied, are not considered significant. Explanation is given if this occurs.
- 11.6.14. Effects are defined as not significant where the relationship between sensitivity and magnitude of change results in changes to the landscape, to the degree that landscape character is subsequently

defined by its existing baseline characteristics rather than the Proposed Development. These may equate, but not exclusively so, to those effects considered to be of Moderate, Moderate - Minor and Minor significance. There may be effects that, when professional judgment is applied, are considered significant. Explanation is given if this occurs. Finally, a judgement is made to whether the effects are considered to be positive (beneficial), negative (adverse), or neutral (no change).

Assessment of Effects on Visual Amenity

- 11.6.15. The significance of effects on visual amenity will be determined by combining the sensitivity of the visual receptors with the magnitude of visual change that will occur. The criteria for informing the sensitivity, magnitude and the significance of effects on visual amenity is provided below:

Assessing the Sensitivity of Visual Receptors to Change

- 11.6.16. The purpose of describing the baseline visual environment is to identify the most important sensitive visual receptors around the Site which have views to or across the Proposed Development. A visual receptor is essentially any person whose visual amenity may be affected as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 11.6.17. The sensitivity of visual receptors to change is assessed by combining judgements of their susceptibility to the type of change or development proposed and the value of the views in question.

Value of Views

- 11.6.18. Attractive views with scenic qualities or from recognised and publicised visitor attractions will predominately have a greater value than a view that may contain detracting elements. Value may also be increased from viewpoints that are within a designated landscape such as a National Park or have a specific cultural link or historical relationship to recognised heritage assets. The criteria for determining the value of the view are set out in the table 11.9 below:

Table 11.9 – Value of View

Value of View	Description
High	Location where the views are widely acknowledged through reference to them in officially promoted guide-books and leaflets or referenced in literature or art. Provision of facilities for the enjoyment of the views will be present such as parking, seating interpretation boards. Views towards the development may be more typically unrestricted and panoramic.

Value of View	Description
Medium	Location where the view may be locally recognised or positively contributes to the setting of the area. Views may contribute to the setting of nationally/locally designated landscape(s) or features of local landscape value. Views towards the development may be more typically primary, direct or open.
Low	Location where the view is not recognised, documented or associated with a designated landscape. The views will not be acknowledged or provided for in terms of facilities. Views towards the development may be more typically secondary, oblique or filtered.

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors to Change

- 11.6.19. The susceptibility of the receptor to changes in views is derived from evaluation of the expectations and occupation or activity of the viewer and the extent to which their attention may be focused on visual amenity and is based on the criteria as described in table 11.10 below:

Table 11.10 – Susceptibility of Visual Receptors

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors	Description
High	May typically include residents of properties, including private houses, caravans, B&Bs, guest houses and hotels where the main view is orientated towards the Proposed Development, or people undertaking recreation where the landscape within which the Proposed Development is seen as the primary reason for attraction or reason for visit (e.g. tourists, walkers and hikers on recognised footpaths, open access land, rights of way and scenic route users). Receptors are more likely to be within a heritage site or within a designated landscape, such as a National Park or AONB and could be attracted to visit more frequently, or stay for longer, by virtue of the view.
Medium	Receptors are able to accommodate a degree of new visual elements of the type proposed, by virtue of their location, nature and/or existing visual qualities and elements. Receptors may be susceptible to change, although less likely to be at a heritage site or within a designated landscape. May typically include travellers on road, rail or other transport routes.

Susceptibility of Visual Receptors	Description
Low	Receptors where new visual elements of the type proposed may be readily accommodated, by virtue of location, nature and/or existing visual qualities and elements. Receptors are not likely to be at a location recognised for its heritage assets or within a designated landscape. May typically include people engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend on appreciation of views of the landscape; people at work, whose attention will not be focussed on the surrounding landscape and whose setting is not typically important to the quality of their working life.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

- 11.6.20. The consideration of value and susceptibility as outlined above enables an informed judgment to be made on the level of sensitivity to be apportioned to each viewpoint within the 3km study area on a sliding scale between Very High and Very Low, as outlined in the table 11.11 below:

Table 11.11 –Sensitivity of Visual Receptors

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors	Description
Very High	Receptors highly responsive to new visual elements of the type proposed, by virtue of their location, nature and/or existing visual qualities and elements. Receptors will be highly susceptible to change and considered to be at a location that may be valued for its views. Receptors will typically include occupiers of residential properties and people engaged in recreational activities in the countryside such as using public rights of way, country parks or heritage assets.
High	Receptors responsive to new visual elements of the type proposed, by virtue of their location, nature and/or existing visual qualities and elements. Receptors will be susceptible to change and considered to be at a location that may be valued for its views. Receptors will typically include people engaged in recreational activities in the countryside such as using public rights of way, country parks or heritage assets.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors	Description
Medium	Receptors are able to accommodate new visual elements of the type proposed, by virtue of their location, nature and/or existing visual qualities and elements. Receptors may be susceptible to change, although may not be at a location valued for its views. Receptors will typically include people engaged in outdoor sporting activities and people travelling through the landscape on minor (B and below) roads and trains.
Low	The majority of receptors are unlikely to be responsive to type of development proposed, by virtue of their location, nature and/or existing visual qualities and elements, but not exclusively so. Receptors may be susceptible to change, but be at a location that is not recognised or valued for its views. Receptors will typically include people undertaking outside work or a sporting activity that is unconnected with the landscape.
Very Low	Receptors are able to accommodate a high degree of new visual elements of the type proposed, by virtue of their location, nature and/or existing visual qualities and elements. Receptors are unlikely to be highly susceptible to change or at a location of valued for its views. Receptors will typically include people at place of work and people travelling through the landscape on A roads and motorways.

Assessing the Magnitude of Visual Change

- 11.6.21. The visual assessment compares the quality of the existing view with that which will result from the construction of the Proposed Development and then verbally quantifies the degree of change.
- 11.6.22. The magnitude of change to the current (baseline) visual environment depends on a combination of factors:
- The size and scale of change in the view;
 - The proximity of the viewpoint to visible elements of the development;
 - The extent and composition of the view (e.g., degree of existing screening, partial, glimpsed or unobstructed views, fleeting or constant nature of view);
 - The degree of contrast or integration of proposed elements with the existing or remaining features or characteristics of the receiving landscape that may detract from or add to its amenity;
 - The relative direct or oblique angle of the view in relation to the receptor; and
 - The duration and reversibility of effect.

- 11.6.23. The magnitude of change to visual amenity is assessed using the criteria as described in the table 11.12 below:

Table 11.12 – Magnitude of Visual Receptors

Magnitude of Visual Effects	Description
Very High	The Proposed Development will be an immediately apparent feature that will occupy a wide proportion of the view, contrasting with existing built features within the view. It will affect and change the overall appearance of the view and to which other features will become subordinate. Development is likely to be visually dominant. Views of the development are likely to be from close distance and long in duration.
High	The Proposed Development will be an apparent feature that is likely to occupy a significant proportion of the overall view. The development may contrast with existing features within the landscape. The Proposed Development is likely to be visually prominent to the extent that it will affect and change the appearance of a number of key existing elements within the view. Views are likely to be medium to short distance and long in duration.
Medium	The Proposed Development will form a recognisable new element within the overall view and will be readily observed without changing the overall nature of the view. Overall quality of the view may remain intact. Development is likely to be visible although not prominent. Views are likely to be medium distance and moderate in duration.
Low	The Proposed Development will form a component of the wider view that might be missed by the casual observer. Awareness of the development will not have a marked effect on the overall quality of the view. Development may be visible although not prominent. Views are likely to be medium to long distance and glimpsed or brief in duration.
Very Low	The Proposed Development will be barely perceptible, or imperceptible, and will have no marked effect on the overall quality of the view. Development is unlikely to be visible or restricted to long distance views that will be glimpsed or very brief in duration.

Assessment of Significance

- 11.6.24. The significance of effects on visual amenity is assessed using the appropriate national and international quality standards and professional judgement. For clarity and transparency, criteria have been used to attribute levels of significance. Broadly, the significance is a function of the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of receptors. The reversibility and duration of the effect are also important considerations.

- 11.6.25. For each assessment factor the sensitivity of the effect is combined with magnitude to give an overall score for the significance of the impact as described in the table 11.13 below:

Table 11.13 – Significance of Visual Effects

Significance of Visual Effects	Description
Major	The Proposed Development will affect existing views to the extent that defining visual elements will become subservient within the view. When viewed within the context of the landscape, the Proposed Development is likely to be seen to conflict with existing visual amenity. Receptors are likely to be categorised as being of high sensitivity.
Major Moderate	– The Proposed Development will be visually prominent, which may lead to the loss of some essential landscape features which contribute to the visual character or quality of the view. Receptors are more likely to be categorised as being of medium or high sensitivity.
Moderate	The Proposed Development will result in some alteration to landscape features which contribute to the existing visual character or quality, but the overall integrity of the view is maintained. The Proposed Development may be suitably absorbed or accommodated within the view alongside existing visual elements. Receptors are likely to be categorised as being of medium sensitivity.
Moderate-Minor	The Proposed Development will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features which contribute to the visual character or quality of the view. Receptors are more likely to be categorised as being of medium or low sensitivity, although not exclusively so.
Minor	The development will be integrated into the existing landscape without having a material effect upon the distinctive and valued characteristics of the view. Receptors are likely to be categorised as being of low sensitivity.

- 11.6.26. Significant effects occur where the relationship of sensitivity and magnitude results in the Proposed Development affecting the view experience to the degree that visual amenity is subsequently dominated, defined or considerably influenced by the presence of the Proposed Development. These may equate, but not exclusively so, to those effects considered to be of Major or Major-Moderate significance. There

may be effects that, when professional judgment is applied, are not considered significant. Explanation is given if this occurs.

- 11.6.27. Effects are defined as not significant where the relationship of sensitivity and magnitude results in changes to the view experience to the degree that visual amenity is subsequently unaffected by the presence of the Proposed Development. These may equate, but not exclusively so, to those effects considered to be between Moderate, Moderate - Minor and Minor significance. There may be effects that, when professional judgment is applied, are considered significant. Explanation is given if this occurs. Finally, a judgement is made to whether the effects are considered to be positive (beneficial), negative (adverse), or neutral (no change).

Geographical Scope

- 11.6.28. A 3km radius study area from the centre of the Site is considered appropriate for the scale and nature of the development.
- 11.6.29. Visual impacts beyond 3km were not considered to be significant, given the distance, nature of the Proposed Development and existing surrounding landscape typologies and topography following an initial reconnaissance survey.

Temporal Scope

- 11.6.30. This assessment considers the construction stage effects that will persist for a limited period (ten years) and are considered temporary.
- 11.6.31. Following construction activities, the changes and effects to the baseline landscape and visual receptors as a consequence of the 'operation' of the Proposed Development are considered to be permanent and irreversible and likely to persist for the foreseeable future.

Potential Effects on Landscape Character

- 11.6.32. This section of the LVIA establishes the potential effects on landscape character and visual amenity, during the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. The effects during the operational phase have been assessed from each of the identified landscape character areas with views of the Proposed Development and 4no. viewpoint locations selected. An assessment of the magnitude of these effects and their significance is made on the basis of the criteria set out in the methodology and the assessment of the baseline landscape and visual character.
- 11.6.33. The assessment of effects takes into consideration the following issues;
- Direct and indirect effects on landscape character and changes to the landscape,
 - Effects on the visual amenity of the study area and from the selected viewpoints including changes to the composition of views and the perception and response by receptor groups to these changes,
 - The magnitude, duration, and level of permanence of effects, and,

- The effects during the construction and operational phases of the development.

Potential Construction Effects on Landscape Character

- 11.6.34. This section looks at the effects on landscape character during the construction phases of the development. The construction of the Site is assumed to include the following activities.
- Ground remediation and ground excavation works, including clearance works, topsoil stripping, levelling and cut and fill activities,
 - Establishment of site compounds and facilities,
 - Movement and storage of plant, equipment and construction materials both within and to the Site,
 - Erection of construction infrastructure (e.g., mobile cranes), and,
 - Construction of roads and buildings.
- 11.6.35. Potential impacts arising during the construction phase of the Proposed Development on landscape are of lower magnitude than those of the operational phase, predominantly due to the shorter timescale and temporary nature of the construction phase of works.
- 11.6.36. Impacts have been assessed in accordance with the criteria provided in the methodology.
- 11.6.37. Changes to the landscape character of the Site will occur during the site clearance and preparations stages. Direct effects on landscape will be limited to LCA 10: Gelli-bwch Works and will affect the majority of the character area, with only the southern part not directly affected. This widespread direct effect is likely to change the overall character of the LCA. Effects of this nature are considered to be of high magnitude of effect within LCA 10.
- 11.6.38. The most significant impacts on landscape character within the construction phase will likely occur as a result of activity associated with the construction of the building. The use of cranes is likely to have a greater magnitude of effect on landscape character as these may be visible from greater distances than other site activities or the development during operation. The impact of cranes is expected to be direct, short term and reversible within LCA 10.
- 11.6.39. LCA 10 is considered to have a landscape sensitivity of low and magnitude of landscape effect of the proposed construction activities range from low to high, with high effects being limited to within proximity to the Proposed Development. Therefore, as the Proposed Development covers much of LCA 10, overall significance of effects on landscape character are predicted to be **major** and **significant**. Effects are considered to be **slight negative**, with the reclaimed wilderness character being lost.
- 11.6.40. Direct impacts of the construction phase outside of the Site itself, will be low and restricted to the delivery route itself. Due to the Site's proximity to Junction 43 of the M4, delivery traffic will have minimal effects on the surrounding areas and will be temporary and reversible. It is assessed as low magnitude of effects.

11.6.41. Construction activity is predicted to have low to moderate magnitude on areas outside of the Site and will be limited to areas that have close uninterrupted views of the Site. LCA 01, LCA 07, LCA 09, LCA 11, LCA 16, LCA 19 and LCA 24 are the most likely character areas to be affected by construction activities. The impact of the construction activities is expected to be moderate, and the dominant characters of the areas will remain unchanged across the wider extent of the LCAs. Therefore, effects on landscape character on these LCAs arising from the construction phase of the development are predicted to be of **minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of these LCAs during the construction phase.

11.6.42. Overall effects on all other LCAs in the 3km study area are considered to be negligible and of **minor, not significance and neutral**, as construction activities are not expected to result in any fundamental change to the overall existing landscape character.

Potential Operational Effects on Landscape Character

11.6.43. This section looks at the effects on landscape character during the operational phase of the development. The value of the landscape and the susceptibility of the landscape receptors to change are noted in *Appendix 11.1 Landscape Character Area (LCA) Descriptions*

LCA 01: A465

Landscape Sensitivity: Very Low

11.6.44. Landscape value is considered to be low and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is low. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be very low.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Very Low

11.6.45. There will be no direct effects on the landscape character within the LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be limited to very limited areas including to the roundabout at Junction 43, directly adjacent to the Site, and at the bridge over the junction with the A474. Elsewhere in the LCA the significant extent of vegetation along the embankment the A465 limits the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of the LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Site is visible, only part of the development is likely to be visible and will be viewed alongside existing development of a similar nature. On balance, magnitude of effect is considered to be very low.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Minor

11.6.46. The landscape is considered to be of very low landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effects also very low. The Proposed Development will result in no loss or alteration to elements of landscape character within the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features. Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **minor** and **not significant**. It is

considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 07: Crymlyn Bog

Landscape Sensitivity: Very High

- 11.6.47. Landscape value is considered to be outstanding and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is medium. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be very high.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Medium

- 11.6.48. There will be both direct and indirect effects on the landscape character within the LCA. Direct effects will be limited to the area of the LCA where the most westerly portion of the Proposed Development falls. This will not include any built development and is to be enhanced as an ecological habitat mitigation area. Retained and enhanced existing structural vegetation will also provide some screening and separation between this area and the remainder of the Site. As the area is to be enhanced and improved as an ecological habitat to transition seamlessly with Crymlyn Bog, it will be perceived as a positive effect on the landscape character of the LCA within this area.
- 11.6.49. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be limited to the northern and western areas as the southern areas are largely obscured by the Gelli-bwch Hills. Elsewhere in the LCA pockets of woodland and hedgerow vegetation reduces the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape the further from the Proposed Development. Proposed and retained green infrastructure within the Proposed Development, particularly within the western areas, will break up views of the development and help it to integrate into the landscape. Characteristic views are expected to remain largely unchanged across much of the LCA. Existing landscape character elements across much of the LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development.
- 11.6.50. Where the Site is visible, only part of the development is likely to be visible on higher land rising above the lowland bog and blocks of woodland and will be viewed alongside and possibly connecting existing developments of a similar nature. These developments include Llandarcy Urban Village Phase 1a and b, which is of a similar architectural style to the Proposed Development, and the industrial area at Tank Farm Road.
- 11.6.51. Magnitude of landscape effect is likely to be varied across this LCA; however, the development may result in alteration to characteristic landscape elements across parts of the LCA. Factors which limit magnitude of effect include the screening effects of existing retained landscape elements, existing landscape characteristics. On balance, overall magnitude of landscape effect within this LCA is considered to be medium.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Moderate

- 11.6.52. The landscape is considered to be of high landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effects medium. The Proposed Development will result in some loss or alteration to elements of landscape character within the LCA. Where effects occur, the Proposed Development will contrast with the rural setting in which it will be seen from and may influence key attributes to the extent that changes to the character of the landscape may be noticeable. However, effects of this nature are likely to be restricted to a limited area and from many locations the character of the LCA is predicted to remain largely intact. Overall, the Proposed Development is not expected to become the defining landscape character of this LCA.
- 11.6.53. The potential extent of development impacts on the character of this LCA are mitigated in part by the landscape characteristics of the retained landscape components within the Site, including woodland and hedgerows assisting with the positive integration of the Proposed Development, and also by the strength of the landscape character within the Crymlyn Bog LCA. There will be some adverse effects largely limited to the immediate context of the Site along the eastern edge of the northern area of the LCA. Significance of effect on landscape character is predicted to be **moderate** and **not significant**. On balance, it is predicted that overall, the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 09: Gelli-bwch Hills

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium to High

- 11.6.54. Landscape value is considered to be high and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is medium. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be medium to high.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects:

- 11.6.55. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be contained to the northern slopes of the most northerly hills within the LCA, which overlook the Site. Elsewhere within the LCA, the undulating landform and vegetative enclosure limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of this LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Site is discernible within the adjoining landscape within the north of this LCA, only parts of the development may be visible due to vegetation and the landforms on Site and will be viewed alongside the existing development of a similar nature, Llandarcy Urban Village Phase 1a and b. On balance, magnitude of effects is considered to be low.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Moderate - Minor

- 11.6.56. The landscape is considered to be medium to high landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effects low. The Proposed Development will result in only minor loss or alteration to the elements that form the landscape character within the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features.

Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **moderate - minor and not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 10: Gelli-bwch Works

Landscape Sensitivity: Low:

- 11.6.57. Landscape value is considered to be medium and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is low. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be low.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: High

- 11.6.58. The Site is completely within this LCA, where direct effects on the landscape character will occur. The main change in character will be the introduction of additional urban development and landscape management. The extent to which the change in use is predicted to be perceived is likely to be consistent across most of the LCA, with the exception of the areas outside of the development boundary, where retained and introduced vegetation will provide a degree of screening of the development.
- 11.6.59. The Proposed Development will directly affect the LCA within the development boundary, with large areas being developed on the relatively level plateaus. Vegetation on the steeper slope including woodland and rough grassland is to be retained along with boundary vegetation, although a degree of management will be introduced. The magnitude of landscape effects within the part of the LCA that is within the Site boundary is assessed as high, given the likely defining presence of the Proposed Development within the landscape.
- 11.6.60. Outside of the development boundary, it is predicted that there will be long-term, indirect effects on the landscape character. From some locations within proximity of the development within the LCA the development is likely to become the defining feature, however where significant vegetation is retained these effects are likely to be more limited, particularly within the south of the LCA.
- 11.6.61. Magnitude of landscape effects are likely to be varied across the LCA, however the development is likely to result in alteration to characteristic landscape elements across parts of the LCA. Factors which limit magnitude of effect include the screening effects of existing retained landscape elements and existing characteristics. On balance, overall magnitude of landscape effect within the LCA is considered to be high.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Major

- 11.6.62. The landscape is considered to be of low sensitivity and the magnitude of effects on landscape character very high. There will be direct effects within the confines of the Site boundary, however effects within the wider landscape are likely to be perceived as more limited.
- 11.6.63. Where effects occur, the Proposed Development will contrast with the current reclaimed wild setting of the LCA and is likely to influence key attributes to the extent that changes to the character of the

landscape are easily noticeable. These changes have the potential to become defining of the overall character of the LCA.

- 11.6.64. The potential extent of development impacts on the character of this LCA are mitigated in part by the dominant landscape characteristics of the retained landscape components of the Site, including woodland, hedgerow, trees and landform features. Although the Proposed Development will integrate existing landscape features and attributes such as structural vegetation, landforms, and other site elements, which will assist with the positive integration of the Proposed Development within the LCA. Any adverse effects on character will be largely limited to the immediate context of the Site. Significance of effect on landscape character is predicted to be **major** and **significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **positive** effect on the landscape character of this LCA, providing function and landscape management to what is currently a reclaimed post-industrial area.

LCA 11: Kilvey Hill

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- 11.6.65. Landscape value is considered to be medium and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is medium. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be medium.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Medium

- 11.6.66. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These areas are likely to be largely limited to the higher slopes within the LCA, particularly the more exposed slopes of Kilvey Hill itself. Elsewhere in the LCA, the undulating landform and the vegetative enclosure limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of this LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Site is discernible within the landscape to the north-east it is likely to form a relatively small aspect of the larger view, with retained vegetation features on Site including woodland blocks and structural hedgerows helping to break up the development and help it integrate within the landscape. On balance, magnitude of effect is considered to be medium.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Moderate - Minor

- 11.6.67. The landscape is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effects medium. The Proposed Development will result in minor alteration to elements of landscape character within parts of the LCA to the extent that the project will be visible as an additional element within views from higher areas of the LCA. However, this potential alteration to the landscape character is not considered to have an effect on the overall character of the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features. Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **moderate - minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 15: Mynydd Dinas

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- 11.6.68. Landscape value is considered to be high and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is low. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be medium.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Low

- 11.6.69. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be contained to limited areas of this LCA, predominantly the higher west facing slopes within the northern parcel. Elsewhere within the LCA, the landform and vegetative enclosure limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of this LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Proposed Development is discernible within the view only part of the development may be visible and will likely be perceived as part of the wider landscape due to the undulating landscape and partial screening of vegetation. Magnitude of effect is considered to be low.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Moderate - Minor

- 11.6.70. The landscape is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effect is low. The Proposed Development will result in only minor alteration to elements of landscape character within parts of the LCA to the extent that the project will be visible as an additional element within views from higher areas of the LCA. However, these potential minor alterations to the landscape character are not considered to have effect on the overall character of the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features. Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **moderate - minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 16: Mynydd Drumau

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium to High

- 11.6.71. Landscape value is considered to be high and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is medium. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be medium to high.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Medium

- 11.6.72. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be contained to limited areas of this LCA, predominantly the south facing slopes above Skewen. Elsewhere within the LCA, the undulating landform and vegetative enclosure limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across

much of this LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Site is discernible within the lowland landscape to the south it is likely to form a relatively small element of the larger view, with landform and retained vegetation features on Site including woodland blocks and structural hedgerows helping to break up the development and assisting in integrating in to the landscape. On balance, magnitude of effect is considered to be medium.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Moderate - Minor

- 11.6.73. The landscape is considered to be of medium to high landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effect is medium. The Proposed Development will result in only minor alteration to elements of landscape character within parts of the LCA to the extent that the project will be visible as an additional element within views from higher areas and southern slopes of the LCA. However, this potential alteration to the landscape character is not considered to have an effect on the overall character of the LCA. The development will not be discernible from the majority of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features. Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **moderate - minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 17: Mynydd-y-Gaer / Cefn Morfudd

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- 11.6.74. Landscape value is considered to be high and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is low. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be medium.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Low

- 11.6.75. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be contained to limited areas of this LCA, predominantly the higher west facing slopes within the northern parcel. Elsewhere within the LCA, the landform and vegetative enclosure limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of this LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Proposed Development is discernible within the view only part of the development may be visible and will likely be perceived as part of the wider landscape due to the undulating landscape, partial screening of vegetation and the distance from the Site. Magnitude of effect is considered to be low.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Moderate - Minor

- 11.6.76. The landscape is considered to be medium landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effect is low. The Proposed Development will result in only minor alteration to elements of landscape character within parts of the LCA to the extent that the project will be visible as an additional element within views from higher areas of the LCA. However, any potential minor alteration to the landscape character is not considered to have effect on the overall character of the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of

essential landscape features. Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **moderate - minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 18: Neath

Landscape Sensitivity: Low

- 11.6.77. Landscape value is considered to be medium and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is low. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be low.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Low

- 11.6.78. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be contained to limited areas of the LCA, predominantly to the higher scarp edges in the east between Britton Ferry and Neath and the south facing slopes within the west. Elsewhere within the LCA, the enclosure provided by the build form will limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of this LCA are therefore expected to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Proposed Development is discernible within the view only part of the development may be visible and will likely be perceived as part of the wider landscape due to the undulating landscape, partial screening of vegetation and the distance from the Site. Magnitude of effects are considered to be low.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Minor

- 11.6.79. The landscape is considered to be of low landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effect is also low. The Proposed Development will result in only minor alteration to elements of the landscape character and within parts of the LCA where it will be visible as an additional element within views. These views are predominantly restricted to higher areas of the LCA. However, any potential minor alteration to the landscape character are not considered to have effect on the overall character of the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features. Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect of the landscape character on this LCA.

LCA 19: Penrhiwtyn & River Neath

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- 11.6.80. Landscape value is considered to be high and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is low. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be medium.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects: Low to Very Low

- 11.6.81. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be contained and limited to the northern parts of the LCA where the topography allows views from the flat lowland up onto the higher undulating land of the Site. Elsewhere within the LCA, the undulating landform and intervening vegetative cover limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of this LCA are therefore predicted to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Site is discernible within the adjoining landscape, only part of the development may be visible and is likely to be perceived in distant, partially screened views alongside developments of a similar nature. On balance, magnitude of effect is considered to be low to very low.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Minor

- 11.6.82. The landscape is considered to be of medium landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effect is low to very low. The Proposed Development will result only minor alteration to elements of landscape character within parts of the LCA to the extent that the project will be visible as an additional element within views from the north of the LCA. However, this potential minor alteration to the landscape character is not considered to have effect on the overall character of the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features. Therefore, effects on landscape character are predicted to be **minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect on the landscape character of this LCA.

LCA 24: Tal-y-fedw

Landscape Sensitivity: Medium

- 11.6.83. Landscape value is considered to be medium and susceptibility of landscape receptors to change is medium. Therefore, on balance, landscape sensitivity is considered to be medium.

Magnitude of Landscape Effects:

- 11.6.84. There will be no direct effects on landscape character within this LCA. Indirect effects will be limited to parts of the LCA where views towards the Proposed Development are available. These are likely to be contained and limited to the northern areas of the LCA where the landform is higher and the fieldscape is more open, however views from these areas towards the Site will likely include existing visual detractors including adjacent residential developments and railway cuttings. Elsewhere within the LCA, the intervening vegetative cover and in some areas the built form limit the degree to which the Proposed Development will be perceived within the landscape. Existing landscape character elements across much of this LCA are therefore predicted to remain unaffected by the Proposed Development. Where the Site is discernible within the adjoining landscape, only part of the development may be visible and is likely to be perceived integrated into the landscape, partially screened and alongside existing developments of a similar nature. On balance, magnitude of effect is considered to be low to very low.

Significance of Landscape Effects: Minor

- 11.6.85. The landscape is considered to be low landscape sensitivity and the magnitude of effect is low to very low. The Proposed Development will result in only minor alteration to elements of landscape character within parts of the LCA to the extent that the project will be visible as an additional element within views from the north of the LCA. However, any alterations to the landscape character are not considered to have effect on the overall character of the LCA. The development will not be discernible from much of the LCA and will be visually integrated within the existing landscape without the loss of essential landscape features. Therefore, effects are predicted to be **minor** and **not significant**. It is considered that the Proposed Development will have a **neutral** effect of the landscape character of this LCA.

Potential Effects on Visual Amenity

Assessment of Effect on Visual Amenity: Construction Phase

- 11.6.86. Subject to planning approval, it is anticipated that the development will include a maximum of 2,000 units, with infrastructure work commencing in Summer 2023 and the construction of the houses starting in Autumn/Winter 2023 and being completed in 2036.
- 11.6.87. In 2024 it is anticipated that approximately 40 units will be completed, with approximately 140 in 2025 and 2026. From 2027 – 2036, a total of 170 units will be completed each year.
- 11.6.88. During the construction works, the main effects on visual amenity will be from site activity associated with the development. This will include site compounds, site machinery, including the movement of vehicles/plant/construction workers, silos used for mixing cement, cranes, scaffolding etc.
- 11.6.89. It is predicted that construction activity will be most prominent from locations within close proximity to the Site, such as Crymlyn Gardens, which is located approximately 0.80km north of the Site. From this location construction work will be an immediately apparent feature of the view, although due to the screening from adjacent housing, effects will be restricted to the phase of works associated within the western parts of the Site only. Therefore, effects while may be long in duration, they will be temporary and not extend over the full construction period.
- 11.6.90. Construction activity will also be prominent from the Site entrance, where increased vehicle movement into and out of the Site will be noticeable and extend across the entire duration of the construction phase of works.
- 11.6.91. Activity associated with the construction phase of the development may also be evident from more elevated locations to the north of Skewen, however due to existing vegetation and built form any views will be glimpsed views only.
- 11.6.92. Any effects on visual amenity from other locations within the study area associated with the construction phase of works that are not within proximity of the Site, will quickly diminish due to a combination of distance, screening of views by existing vegetation and built form.

- 11.6.93. Therefore, effects on visual amenity are predicted to be **moderate** to **major moderate** and **significant** from locations where there are close distance, unobstructed views towards the Site, reducing to **minor**, **not significant** and **neutral** from locations that are not within close distance to the Site.

Assessment of Effect on Visual Amenity: Operational Phase

Viewpoint 1 – Drumau Road, Skewen

- 11.6.94. Approximate Distance to Site Boundary: 1.13 km.

Value attached to the view: Low

- 11.6.95. Located on a B-road that runs along the northern edge of Skewen and Birchgrove, this viewpoint is not within a designated landscapes or of any specific cultural or historical importance. Therefore, the value of the view is considered to be low.

Susceptibility of visual receptors to change: Medium to High

- 11.6.96. The predominant receptor type is predicted to be road users travelling along Drumau Road, who will have intermittent views through roadside vegetation across Skewen and towards the Site, with views of Port Talbot and Swansea Bay beyond as they travel through the landscape. Within proximity to the viewpoint however are, four residential properties, with views across the surrounding landscape and who will be more susceptible to change than the road users. Therefore, on balance, the susceptibility of visual receptors to change is considered to be medium to high.

Sensitivity of visual receptors: Medium

- 11.6.97. Receptors are not located within a designated landscape or a site of heritage or historical importance. Nearby residents as opposed to road users are likely to be the most sensitive receptor to change, however due to the nature of the existing views, which includes existing urban development, they may be able to accommodate new visual elements of the type proposed.

Existing View

- 11.6.98. Located on the northern edge of Skewen, from this viewpoint which is at a height of approximately 117m AOD, the foreground views are dominated by a sloping field of unimproved grassland and woodland belt of mature, deciduous trees that screen longer distance views to the southwest including the urban development that sits between Drumau Road and the A4230. Within the midground, the sports pitches to Skewen RFC are clearly visible, as is the housing immediately to the south. Beyond the housing, the topography rises where the existing post-industrial landscape of the Site, as a former BP oil refinery, can be seen. The recent housing development (Phase 1a and b) that extends across the ridgeline is visible, as is Natural Resources Wales (NRW) office block. Long distance views are dominated an undulating ridgeline that contains a mix of agricultural fields and woodland belts.

Predicted View

- 11.6.99. The extent of the Proposed Development is illustrated by the annotated photograph in Figure 11.14 and it is predicted that the proposed primary/nursery school and any associated community playing fields will be visible, as will the proposed block of housing immediately to the east of it. These houses will typically be 2-3 storeys in height, with taller blocks, up to 4 storeys adjacent to the main streets. The proposed houses to the west of Phase 1 of the development, which will predominantly be 2-2.5 storeys in height will also be clearly visible, although due to site levels, it is predicted that the existing housing will remain visible above the rooflines to the proposed houses. The western edge of this proposed block of houses, plus the proposed ecological area and the existing woodland will all be screened from view by existing vegetation.
- 11.6.100. The parcel of land to be developed to the north of the railway line is predicted to be screened from view, from this location, by a combination of existing vegetation and topography.

Magnitude of Visual Effect: Medium

- 11.6.101. The development will form a recognisable new feature within mid-range, extending across a notable proportion of the view. There will be a discernible change when looking towards the Site, which is currently defined by a post-industrial landscape, predominantly covered by scrub vegetation, to one defined by a modern housing development. However, due to the nature of the Proposed Development, in terms of its type, scale and form, it will not contrast with existing built features that already characterise the current view. Views from the nearby properties will be long in duration, although short for the majority of receptors, who will be passing through the landscape.

Significance of Visual Effects: Moderate

- 11.6.102. The sensitivity of receptors from this viewpoint are predicted to be medium and the magnitude of effects medium. The Proposed Development will result in some alteration to the existing character of the view, in that there will be an increase in the proportion of the view that is defined by residential development; however not to the extent that existing visual qualities of the view will be significantly affected. Due to the nature of the development, the existing elements including the ridgeline consisting of woodland blocks and agricultural fields that currently help define the view, will all remain intact.
- 11.6.103. The significance of effects on visual amenity are predicted to be **moderate** and **not significant**. Effects are considered to be **neutral**, as although there will be some changes to the view, the landscape will be able to accommodate the Proposed Development without fundamentally changing the existing character of the view.

Viewpoint 2 – Crymlyn Bog Car Park, Dinam Road, Bon-y-maen

- 11.6.104. Approximate Distance to Site Boundary: 1.82 km.

Value attached to the view: High

- 11.6.105. Located within Crymlyn Bog, which is designated as a SSSI, the site includes a visitors' centre, car park, information boards and benches. Therefore, is considered to be as an area that attracts tourists and so the value of views is considered to be high.

Susceptibility of visual receptors to change: High

- 11.6.106. Although there are some existing visual detractors, there is an overall sense of being within a rural landscape and the predominant receptor type will be visitors to Crymlyn Bog. Their primary reason for being there is likely to undertake recreation within the landscape. The susceptibility of visual receptors to change is considered to be high.

Sensitivity of visual receptors: High

- 11.6.107. Receptors are not located within a nationally designated landscape; however, the majority of visitors are likely to include people undertaking outdoor recreation who may be attracted to the area for its views. Receptors may be able to accommodate a small degree of change to the view, due to the presence of an existing landfill site and distant views to existing settlements.

Existing View

- 11.6.108. From the car park at Crymlyn Bog, the visitors centre building is a prominent feature and contrasts with the trees, overgrown hedgerows and the flat expanse of reed and sedge beds that covers the majority of the nature reserve and the foreground view. Beyond the eastern boundary of Crymlyn Bog, the land rises towards the western edge of the Site. These slopes are typically vegetated with mature woodland belts, although the existing housing within Phase 1a and b is visible on the ridgeline and above the canopies of the woodland. To the south east, the nearby landfill site can be seen, with movement of vehicles a particularly noticeable feature. To the north west and below the ridgeline of Moel Darren, the settlements of Birchgrove and Skewen are visible. Within the far distance there are views towards the ridgelines of Mynydd Blaenhonddan and Moel Pencaerau.

Predicted View

- 11.6.109. The extent of the Proposed Development is illustrated by the annotated photograph in Figure 11.15. From this location the woodland blocks to the western edge of the Site and which are proposed to be retained are predicted to screen views of the houses that are proposed to be constructed within the western half of the Site. Housing with this area will be 2-2.5 storeys in height and therefore any views are likely to be restricted to glimpsed views and/or of the upper sections of the roofs only and predominately to north western parts of the Site. Views of the proposed ecological area to the south western corner of the Site may also be possible, although due to the proposals for area, will not be prominent.

Magnitude of Visual Effect: Very Low

- 11.6.110. From this location, due to the screening effects of vegetation to the Site boundary, the Proposed Development will form a very minor element within the wider view. It will have no effect on the quality of the view and may be missed by receptors using the facilities within Crymlyn Bog.

Significance of Visual Effects: Moderate-Minor

- 11.6.111. The sensitivity of receptors from this viewpoint are predicted to be high and the magnitude of effects very low. Due to the screening of views by the retained existing woodland belt that extends along the western boundary of the Site, the Proposed Development will be visually integrated into the existing view. There will be no discernible change and the existing landscape features that currently define the view will remain intact.
- 11.6.112. The significance of effects on visual amenity are predicted to be **moderate-minor** and **not significant**. Effects are considered to be **neutral** as the landscape will be able to accommodate the Proposed Development without changing the existing character of the view.

Viewpoint 3 – Old Road/Wheathely Road, Neath

- 11.6.113. Approximate Distance to Site Boundary: 2.47 km.

Value attached to the view: Low

- 11.6.114. Located within the residential area of Penrhiwtyn in Neath, the viewpoint is not located within a designated landscape or at a recognised historic or cultural location. The view contains a mix of natural and man-made visual elements that range from hill summits to overhead power lines. The value of the view is considered to be low.

Susceptibility of visual receptors to change: Low

- 11.6.115. There will be residents within adjacent properties that will have oblique views towards the Site, however the predominant receptor type is predicted to be pedestrians walking along the footpath. Their main focus or reason for visit is unlikely to be dependent on the views and therefore susceptibility is considered to be low.

Sensitivity of visual receptors: Low

- 11.6.116. Due to their location within an existing urban environment, receptors are unlikely to be responsive to the type of development proposed and are predicted to be able to accommodate a high degree of visual change.

Existing View

- 11.6.117. Located within the south west of Neath, this viewpoint provides open views west across the surrounding landscape. Beyond the roof of the nearby and recently built houses along Old Road, the foreground is

dominated by a flat floodplain, which has been formed by the River Neath, glimpsed views of which are available. The floodplain typically consists of areas of salt marsh and large agricultural fields of semi-improved grassland. Within the floodplain a number of overhead steel lattice electricity pylons are visible, as are glimpsed views of industrial units that are located adjacent to the river at Neath Abbey Wharf. To the north east, the land rises slightly and the residential areas of Skewen, with the partially wood slopes of Moel Darren beyond clearly visible.

- 11.6.118. Within views to the west and beyond the floodplain, the wooded slopes to the south east of Llandarcy can be seen, as can the existing Phase 1a and b development. Beyond the Site the rounded summit of Kilvey Hill and the residential area of Penlân in Swansea can be seen in the far distance, as can the DVLA office block, located within the Morriston area of the city.

Predicted View

- 11.6.119. The extent of the Proposed Development is illustrated by the annotated photograph in Figure 11.16. The residential blocks to the north of the development within Phase 1a and b may be visible above the existing rooflines, with the proposed school also visible further to the south. The two storey school building is likely to be screened by the proposed 2-4 storey housing to the east of the school, which will be visible within the centre of the view. Development to the north of the railway line is predicted to be screened from view by a combination of topography and existing vegetation.

Magnitude of Visual Effect: Low

- 11.6.120. This viewpoint location provides a broad, open views across the landscape and towards the Proposed Development. Following completion of the construction works there will be an increase in the horizontal proportion of the view in which built form will be seen, however it will only occupy only a small proportion of the overall view and be viewed in combination with a variety of existing built elements. In addition, the ridgeline that forms a prominent feature of existing views will not be interrupted and remain intact. While the development will be visible, it is not predicted to change the overall nature or quality of the view. Any views will be brief in duration and may be missed by the casual observer.

Significance of Visual Effects: Moderate-Minor

- 11.6.121. The sensitivity of receptors from this viewpoint are predicted to be low and the magnitude of effects also low. It is predicted that the development will be visually absorbed into the existing landscape alongside existing landscape features and therefore the characteristics that currently define the view will not change.
- 11.6.122. The significance of effects on visual amenity are predicted to be **moderate-minor** and **not significant**. Effects are considered to be **neutral** as the landscape will be able to accommodate the Proposed Development without changing the existing character of the view.

Viewpoint 4 – Crymlyn Gardens, Skewen

- 11.6.123. Approximate Distance to Site Boundary: 0.80 km.

Value attached to the view: Low

- 11.6.124. Located within a new housing development on the south western edge of Skewen, the development is not located within a designated landscape and is not a recognised tourist, heritage or cultural location. Views are typically focussed towards the site of the former BP oil refinery and so the value attached to the view is considered to be low.

Susceptibility of visual receptors to change: Medium

- 11.6.125. The predominant receptor type is predicted to be residents, however any views towards the Proposed Development from their properties will be oblique, rather than direct. Given their location within an existing housing development, they may be able to accommodate a degree of new visual elements of the type proposed.

Sensitivity of visual receptors: Medium

- 11.6.126. Due to the nature of the receptor, they may be susceptible to change, but they are not within a landscape that designated or is recognised for its views. In addition, any views of the Proposed Development will not be direct and therefore may be able to accommodate changes within the view.

Existing View

- 11.6.127. From this residential street within Skewen, views to the south/west and south/south east are restricted to short distance views only by the two storey detached houses that line either side of the road. The properties channel views towards the Site, where, clearly visible above the rooflines, the northern facing slopes of the former BP oil refinery site, now vegetated with scrub can clearly be seen. Extending across the ridgeline, the existing housing to Phase 1a and b of the development are visible, as is the escarpment, which forms a prominent feature. Further to the west along the ridgeline and adjacent to the existing houses a woodland block of trees is visible.

Predicted View

- 11.6.128. The extent of the Proposed Development is illustrated by the annotated photograph in Figure 11.17a and 11.17b. The school is likely to be predominantly screened from view by the nearby housing in Crymlyn Gardens, with any views restricted to western areas of the Site allocated for education. On land to the west of the school and rising up the slopes of the Site, the view will be dominated by proposed 2-3 storey housing. The housing to located within the south west corner of the Site will increase the horizontal proportion of the view in which is development is seen and is predicted to be viewed as an extension to the existing housing along the ridgeline. Due to site topography, the escarpment may be screened from view, however the existing housing to Phase 1a and b is predicted to remain visible above the rooflines of the proposed housing, which is typically a maximum of 2-3 storeys in height, within this part of the Site.
- 11.6.129. The woodland blocks to the west of the view, will be retained and therefore will remain a feature of the view following completion of the development.

Magnitude of Visual Effect: High

- 11.6.130. From this location, views are channelled by existing housing towards the Proposed Development, where views of the Site are currently defined by scrub vegetation following the remediation of the land within the former BP oil refinery site, with the existing housing to Phase 1a and b of the development beyond. Following the completion of the works the proposed 2-3 storey residential blocks will form a prominent feature across a wide proportion of the view. However, modern housing development is an existing and defining character of current views and therefore, although the proportion of housing visible within the view will noticeably increase, the Proposed Development will not conflict with existing landscape features. Views will be long in duration, when residents are at home, but any views will be oblique rather than direct.

Significance of Visual Effects: Moderate to Major-Moderate

- 11.6.131. The residential blocks within south western areas of the Site will be a visually prominent feature of the view that will lead to the loss of some existing landscape features. These features however, will be views of the remediated land of the former BP oil refinery site and therefore not considered to be of particularly high aesthetic quality. Although there will be a change in the view that is experienced, the proposed housing will not conflict with existing features that characterise the view, i.e., modern housing development. This will help accommodate the development alongside existing visual elements.
- 11.6.132. The significance of effects on visual amenity are predicted to be **moderate to major-moderate** and **significant**. Although effects are considered to be significant as there will be a notable change in the view when looking south, these changes are considered to result in a slight **positive** change to the view. This will be due to views of a derelict post-industrial landscape being replaced by a designed landscape that will complement the existing components of the view.

Potential Effects on Transport Routes

- 11.6.133. This section looks at the main transport routes that have been identified within paragraphs 11.3.15 to 11.5.21. As landscape character and visual amenity are closely linked, both have been assessed alongside each other in this section.
- 11.6.134. As noted in paragraph 11.3.15 the largest primary road that passes through the study area is the M4 motorway, however the carriageway is typically within a cutting, flanked by vegetation and therefore views out across the surrounding landscape, including views towards the Site are constrained. Therefore, there will be no views of the Proposed Development and therefore no effects on the existing landscape character or on visual amenity.
- 11.6.135. From the A465 at Junction 43 of the M4 motorway, there will be close distant views of the Site as road users negotiate the roundabout. The proposed 2.5-4 storey residential blocks and also the 2-3 storey residential blocks to the east of the proposed school will form a prominent feature within the view and will be viewed in combination with the housing to Phase 1a and 1b of the development. Views towards the proposed school are predicted to be screened from view by a combination of existing buildings, located immediately to the east of the Site boundary and the proposed residential blocks.

- 11.6.136. The main receptor types will be road users and therefore unlikely to be sensitive to the type of development proposed and not within a location that is noted for its views. Therefore, although there will be a change in the view, it is not predicted that the overall quality of the view will change and effects on visual amenity are considered to be not significant.
- 11.6.137. The Zone of Visual Influence (refer to figure 11.3) indicates that there will be no visibility of the Proposed Development from the A483 Fabian Way), the A4217 and the A4230 and therefore no effects on landscape character or visual amenity from these three routes.
- 11.6.138. Views from the A48 may be possible when travelling west, as the carriageway crosses over the River Neath. This section of the route is elevated and may provide glimpsed views of development within the northern parcel of land within the Site, where the residential blocks will typically be 2-3 storeys in height. However, any views of the development will occupy only a small proportion of the overall view, be very brief in duration and may be further mitigated by proposed buffer planting to the north eastern corner of the Site boundary.
- 11.6.139. Similarly, there may be glimpsed views from the A474, where the carriageway crosses the River Neath. Any views are predicted to be restricted to the upper sections of the central areas of the development. Any views of the development however, will be very brief in duration and viewed within a broad, open landscape and is likely to be missed by the casual observer. Therefore, effects on landscape character and visual amenity from the A48 will not be significant.
- 11.6.140. As noted in paragraph 11.3.30, a railway line passes through the Site, however the track is set within a cutting and densely vegetated on both sides, therefore any views possible will be glimpsed views only and brief in duration. As the line heads east towards Britton Ferry, crossing the River Neath and its floodplain, the track sits on an embankment, which potentially will provide more open views of the surrounding landscape including the Proposed Development. From this section of the track the more elevated land within western parts of the Site is predicted to be the most visible, however any views will be brief in duration.
- 11.6.141. Visibility from the railway line that passes through Neath and Skewen, is potentially restricted to areas to the east of Abbey Neath, however dense vegetation and existing built form located immediately adjacent to the track is predicted to restrict all view so the Proposed Development.
- 11.6.142. It is predicted that there will be no significant effects on landscape character or visual amenity from the railway lines that pass through the study area.

Potential Effects on Public Rights of Way and National Cycle Routes

- 11.6.143. From the Wales Coast Path, views of the Proposed Development are predicted to be restricted to the section of the route that follow the M48 and where it crosses the River Neath. From this elevated section of the route there may be glimpsed views of development within the northern parcel of land within the Site, where the residential blocks will typically be 2-3 storeys in height. However, any views will occupy only a very small proportion of the overall view and may be further mitigated by proposed buffer planting

to the north eastern corner of the Site boundary. On balance it is considered that there will be no significant effects on landscape character or on visual amenity from the Wales Coast Path

11.6.144. As noted in paragraph 11.3.23, NCR 4 predominantly follows the route of the Wales Coast Path and therefore visibility of the Proposed Development will be restricted to elevated locations on the A48, as it crosses the River Neath and effects on visual amenity and landscape character are not predicted to be significant, for the same reasons as described in paragraph 11.6.50 above.

11.6.145. From NCR 47 it is predicted that views of the Proposed Development will be restricted to a very short section of the route, to the north west of Brynhyfryd, Neath, where the route runs adjacent to the Neath Canal. From this location any development within the Site will be viewed within an open landscape that contains many existing landscape features, including residential development. It will occupy only a very small proportion of the overall view and may be missed by the casual observer when cycling along the route. Therefore, effects on landscape character and visual amenity are not predicted to be significant.

Potential Effects on Statutory and Non-Statutory Landscape Designations

11.6.146. This section looks at both the effects on the statutory and non-statutory designations that have been identified within paragraphs 11.3.25 to 11.3.33.

Crymlyn Bog Ramsar Wetland of International Importance

11.6.147. The Indicative Visual Envelope highlights that there may be potential views of the Proposed Development from much of the Crymlyn Bog Ramsar Wetland, particularly within the northern areas of the bog where it is adjacent to the Site. Viewpoint 2 (Figure 11.15) from the Crymlyn Bog Visitor Centre has been selected as a typical view from this area of Crymlyn Bog and to represent key receptors and illustrate potential visual effects, these visual effects are discussed within paragraph 11.6.11 – 11.6.19 of this LVIA. Crymlyn Bog falls into its own landscape character area, LCA 07: Crymlyn Bog. All areas of Crymlyn Bog that are predicted to have potential view of the Proposed Development by the initiative visual envelope are within this LCA. The potential landscape effects of the Proposed Development on the character of this LCA is discussed in paragraphs 11.7.17 to 11.7.23 of this LVIA. Overall, the defining landscape qualities of the Crymlyn Bog Ramsar Wetland are not likely to be affected as a result of the Proposed Development.

Open Access and Common Land

11.6.148. The Indicative Visual Envelope (refer to Figure 11.3) indicates that in theory there will be views of the Proposed Development from the open access land to the eastern facing slopes of Kilvey Hill. From this elevated location it is predicted that the 2-3 storey residential blocks, to the south west of the school will be visible above the existing woodland blocks to the western boundary of the Site, which are to be retained. The Proposed Development will be viewed within an open landscape that already contains many built elements of the type proposed. This in combination with the distance that the Site will be viewed at (approximately 2.0km to the Site boundary), will assist in absorbing the Proposed Development into the wider view. Therefore, it is predicted that effects on landscape character and visual amenity will not be significant.

- 11.6.149. From the area of open access land to the north of Britton Ferry, the Visual Envelope indicates that views of the Proposed Development will be restricted to eastern fringes only. This area of the open access land is vegetated with woodland and therefore in reality all views towards the Proposed Development will be screened therefore there will be no effects on landscape character or visual amenity as a result.

Conservation Areas

- 11.6.150. The Indicative Visual Envelope indicates that there may only be potential views of the Proposed Development from limited areas of Llandarcy Village Conservation area. These potential views are likely to be limited to the areas of the southern areas of the conservation area that are directly adjacent to the Site and to limited parts of the open space where rooflines to the 2.5 – 4 storey residential blocks to the north of Phase 1a and b may be visible on the higher ground above the intervening structural woodland vegetation. From these open spaces the rooftops and partial facades of the Llandarcy Urban Village Phase 1a and b are visible above those of the buildings within the conservation area and the woodland. Llandarcy Urban Village Phase 1 has a significant impact on the northern end of the conservation area where the development is directly adjacent with no vegetation screening or softening of the modern development. The retained existing structural vegetation will largely screen the Proposed Development from the conservation area with only partial views predicted, likely being viewed alongside the existing development of a similar nature. The defining existing landscape character and visual amenity within the Llandarcy Village Conservation Area are not predicted to be affected as a result of the Proposed Development.

Ancient Woodland

- 11.6.151. As noted in paragraph 11.3.34, a relatively small area of ancient woodland falls within the Site, to the east of the retained lake within the Site and to the west of the railway line. This area of woodland will be partially lost through the alterations to the landform within the area as part of the wider drainage strategy for the Site. The loss of this area of ancient woodland will be in part mitigated for through additional woodland planting as part of the boundary vegetation enhancement. The defining landscape qualities of this area of Ancient Woodland will not be affected as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 11.6.152. The Indicative Visual Envelope highlights there will be a number of areas of Ancient Woodland within the study area with potential views of the Site. As these areas of Ancient Woodland are not characterised by their outward views, it is predicted that the defining landscape qualities of these areas of Ancient Woodland are not likely to be affected as a result of the Proposed Development.

11.7. Assessment summary

- 11.7.1. This LVIA has examined the likely effects on the Proposed Development on the former BP oil refinery site on landscape character and visual amenity within a 3km study area. This was undertaken through the application of an acknowledged methodology for landscape and visual assessment, which established an appropriate scope for the landscape and visual assessment undertaken.
- 11.7.2. A total of 11no. LCAs within the 3km study area were identified where it was considered in theory effects on landscape character may occur as a result of the Proposed Development. Following the assessment,

it was concluded that significant effects are likely to only occur within the Site itself (LCA 10 Gelli-bwch Works). The character within this LCA is currently defined by the scrub vegetation following the remediation works associated with the former BP oil refinery site and the new housing development (Phase 1a and b) to the south eastern boundary of the LCA. Following completion of the development, the character of the landscape will be defined by modern housing development, although the retention of existing boundary vegetation, the implementation of new planting and a management regime are all seen to positively contribute to the landscape character.

- 11.7.3. A small parcel of land within LCA 07 Crymlyn Bog lies within the Site boundary. Within this area there will be also be direct effects on landscape character as a result of the implementation of a habitat mitigation area. Consequently, any effects on landscape character are considered to be positive.
- 11.7.4. From the remainder of the land within LCA 07 Crymlyn Bog and all other surrounding LCAs within the study area, it is predicted that effects on landscape character will not be significant, as the Proposed Development will be accommodated in to the existing landscape without changing the existing baseline conditions that currently define their character.
- 11.7.5. A summary of the effects on landscape character from all 11 LCAs is provided in table 11.14 below.

Summary of Potential Effects on Landscape Character

Table 11.14 – Summary of Effects on Landscape Character

LCA	Name	Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors	Magnitude of Landscape Receptors	Significance of Landscape Effects
LCA 01	A465	Very Low	Very Low	Minor Not Significant Neutral
LCA 07	Crymlyn Bog	Very High	Medium	Moderate Not Significant Neutral
LCA 09	Gelli-bwch Hills	Medium to High	Low	Moderate – Minor Not Significant Neutral

LCA	Name	Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors	Magnitude of Landscape Receptors	Significance of Landscape Effects
LCA 10	Gelli-bwch Works	Medium	High	Major Significant Positive
LCA 11	Kilvey Hill	Medium	Medium	Moderate – Minor Not Significant Neutral
LCA 15	Mynydd Dinas	Medium	Low	Moderate – Minor Not Significant Neutral
LCA 16	Mynydd Drumau	Medium to High	Medium	Moderate – Minor Not Significant Neutral
LCA 17	Mynydd-y-Gaer / Cefn Morfudd	Medium	Low	Moderate – Minor Not Significant Neutral
LCA 18	Neath	Low	Low	Minor Not Significant Neutral
LCA 19	Penrhiwtyn & River Neath	Medium	Low to Very Low	Minor Not Significant Neutral
LCA 24	Tal-y-fedw	Medium	Low to Very Low	Minor

LCA	Name	Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors	Magnitude of Landscape Receptors	Significance of Landscape Effects
				Not Significant
				Neutral

- 11.7.6. In order to assess the effects on visual amenity, 4no. viewpoints were selected to represent a range of locations and receptors types that are found within the 3km study area. The assessment concluded that from viewpoint 4 – Crymlyn Gardens, Skewen there will be significant effects on visual amenity following the completion of the Proposed Development. Existing views are however, from a modern housing estate, with views towards the existing housing to Phase 1a and b and also the scrub vegetation of the former BP oil refinery site. Therefore, although effects on visual amenity are predicted to be significant, they are considered to result in a slight positive effect on visual amenity as views of the derelict industrial land will be replaced by development that is more in keeping with the surrounding landscape.
- 11.7.7. From the remaining 3 viewpoints effects on visual amenity are considered to be not significant. From these locations it is considered that the Proposed Development could be visually absorbed together with the existing elements that define the view and therefore the overall characteristics of the view will not change.
- 11.7.8. A summary of the effects on visual amenity from all 4 viewpoints is provided in table 11.15 overleaf.

Table 11.15 – Summary of Effects on Visual Amenity

Viewpoint No.	Location	Sensitivity of Visual Receptor	Magnitude of Visual Effect	Significance of Visual Effects
1	Drumau Road, Skewen	Medium	Medium	Moderate Not Significant Neutral
2	Crymlyn Bog Car Park, Dinam Road, Bon-y-maen	High	Very Low	Moderate-Minor Not Significant Neutral
3	Old Road/Wheathely Road, Neath	Low	Low	Moderate-Minor Not Significant Neutral
4	Crymlyn Gardens, Skewen	Medium	High	Moderate to Major-Moderate Significant Positive