

Appendix C

Gilfach yr Haidd Farm OPD

Landscape and Visual Assessment

- 1.1.1 Gilfach yr Haidd Farm is located within the National Landscape Character Area 37 – South Wales Valleys, characterised by its distinctive industrial heritage and complex landscape morphology. Locally, Gilfach yr Haidd Farm sits within the Special Landscape Area SLA1(EN2/1) Mynydd y Garth.
- 1.1.2 The landscape and visual assessment study area was set at a 3km distance, enabling all landscape and visual receptors that may experience noticeable effects as a result of the development to be considered. This distance is proportionate to the scale and nature of the development, without resulting in excessive levels of detail that detract from the key findings.
- 1.1.3 Landscape and visual receptors were identified by searching online information including:
- www.naturalresources.wales – National Landscape Character Areas
 - www.welsh-historic-landscape-characterisation.org - Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Guidance
 - www.magic.gov.uk – national designations
- 1.1.4 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) model and Ordnance Survey base mapping were analysed to identify visual receptors such as local residents, users of public rights of way, and visitors to open spaces and areas of countryside.
- Landscape Character Baseline Landscape Characteristics**
- 1.1.5 The key characteristics judged to be most relevant to the site are highlighted bold in the lists below.
- 1.1.6 The key characteristics of National Landscape Character 37 - South Wales Valleys are:
- Distinctive landscape of deep, steep-sided valleys dissecting extensive upland plateaux, characterized by wild/windswept, unenclosed tracts running parallel to valley floors.
 - Complex urban and industrial heritage, with ribbon developments extending through valleys and up hillsides.
 - Landscape mosaic featuring:
 - Extensive remains of heavy industry (mix of derelict, preserved, and redeveloped sites).
 - Large blocks of coniferous and deciduous woodland.

- Heather, rough grassland, and steep bracken slopes dominating upland areas.
- Dramatic contrast between busy, industrialised valley bottoms and relatively remote and wild adjacent hill plateaus.
- Transport infrastructure primarily confined to valley floors.
- 19th-century industrial legacy evident through extensive infrastructure, iconic terraced housing and significant industrial buildings.
- Emerging regeneration characterized by softer, greener environmental reclamation and integration of wildlife conservation with economic development.
- Landscape elements include dry stone walls on common lands, hedgerows on lower fields, swathes of broadleaved woodland and improved pastures on valley sides.
- Iconic cultural identity rooted in industrial and agricultural heritage.

1.1.7 The key characteristics of the local SLA1 Mynydd y Garth are:

- Upland moorland plateau of Mynydd y Garth, Cefn Gwrhyd and Mynydd Carnllechart
- Upland area dominated by pennant sandstone and underlying Productive Coal Formation
- Land cover predominately grazed pasture with deciduous tree cover along riparian corridors
- High scenic upland mosaic landscape quality with panoramic views out from higher elevations
- Landscape bears evidence of evolution over millennia to include: prehistoric cairns, ancient field systems, trackways, industrial spoil heaps and small pockets of afforestation
- Features of the upland include post-medieval boundary stones and sheep folds
- A key non-forested areas within the County Borough classified as “tranquil” but has seen considerable erosion of ‘tranquillity’ since 1997

Landscape Character Impact

1.1.8 The characteristics of the National Landscape Character Area 37 present on and around the site include:

- Distinctive landscape of deep, steep-sided valleys dissecting extensive upland plateaux, characterized by wild/windswept, unenclosed tracts running parallel to valley floors.
- Heather, rough grassland, and steep bracken slopes dominating upland areas.

- Dramatic contrast between busy, industrialised valley bottoms and relatively remote and wild adjacent hill plateaus

1.1.9 Characteristics of the local Special Landscape Area 1 present on and around the site include:

- Land cover predominately grazed pasture with deciduous tree cover along riparian corridors
- High scenic upland mosaic landscape quality with panoramic views out from higher elevations
- Landscape bears evidence of evolution over millennia to include prehistoric cairns, ancient field systems, trackways, industrial spoil heaps and small pockets of afforestation

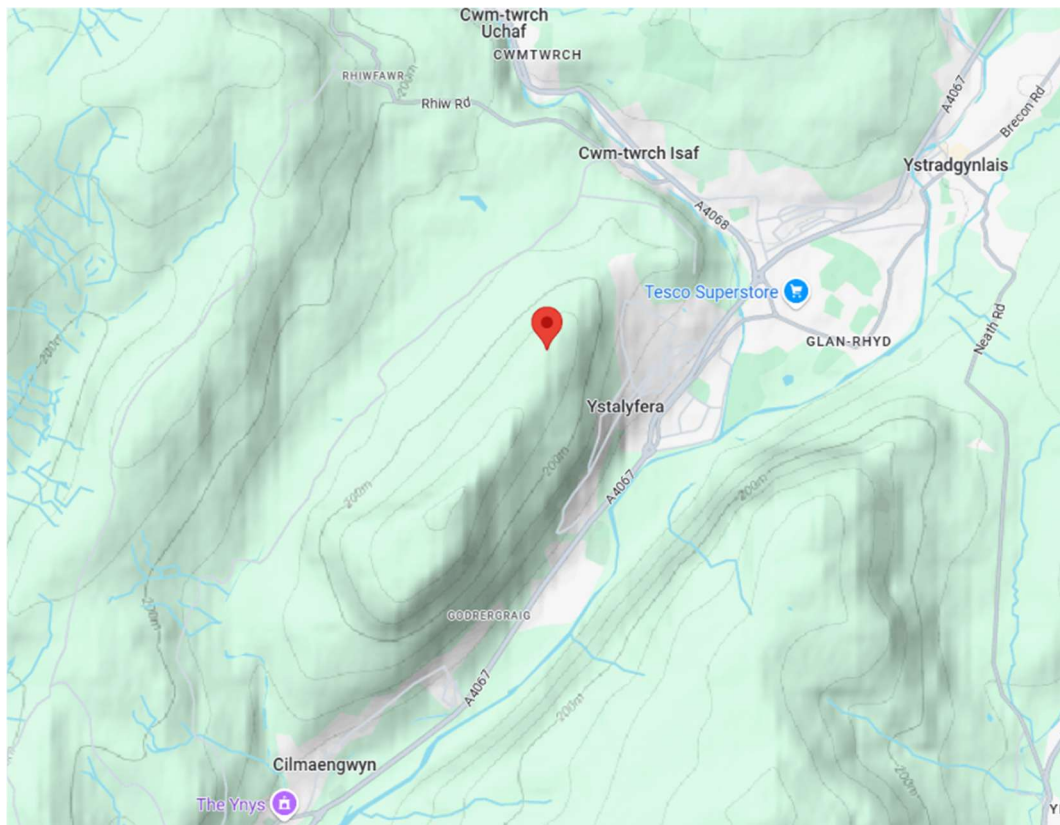


Figure 1: Terrain relief map of the site and surroundings

- 1.1.10 The site sits on the western side of the hill ridge and is approximately 0.5km outside of Ystalyfera. The site sits in between already existing farmsteads to the north, south and west.
- 1.1.11 The proposed development, including the dwelling, its outbuildings (packing barn and wood store with solar PV roof) and polytunnel and small domestic wind turbine (1.58m dia), will create a localised change to the site as well as some change to the

wider landscape. The proposed development sits above the existing urbanised areas albeit on the other side of the ridge to the local settlement.

- 1.1.12 The impact of landscape character change has been minimised by confining the proposed development to areas with the most landscape protection and least visibility. The proposed development is located in a 'bowl' in the land, reducing the impact it will have on the wider landscape. The containers and hardstanding have been sited lower down on the western slope near the treeline and access track to further reduce impact to the landscape.
- 1.1.13 The planting of new hedges and trees, as outlined in the landscape management plan (**Section 7 of MP**), will further mitigate the effects of the proposed development on the landscape character.
- 1.1.14 The proposed development would not result in significant change in the overall landscape character. There will be some localised character change but the type of agricultural development that is proposed is in keeping with other farm holdings along the upland area and valley sides.

Visual Impact

- 1.1.15 Visual impacts relate to the changes that arise in the composition of available views. These changes affect the landscape scene and to peoples' responses (visual receptors) to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity and the peoples' appreciation of the landscape.
- 1.1.16 The term 'visual receptors' relates to users, residents and /or visitors to a location potentially influenced by the proposals.

Existing Visibility of the Site

- 1.1.17 The site sits on the northern point of the upland spine sloping off to the northeast. The site also slopes to the southeast and northwest into the valleys below. It sits between 220m-272m AOD. The site is an existing agricultural holding which was previously part of a larger farm. It has an existing access track traversing up the northwestern slope to the fields which is a PRofW. Some of the land is visible from this track which is not well used.
- 1.1.18 Aside from the footpath/track passing through the land there are no views of the site from the immediate surroundings, up to 1.5km away. This includes the settlement of Ystalyfera. However, far reaching views of the site can be seen from beyond 1.5km away on high ground to the northwest, northeast and south east. The closest public view outside the land is identified as 1.9 km distant.

Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 1.1.19 A ZVT model was generated to assist in the assessment of potential visual impacts of any development. The ZVT is a working tool used to inform on the extent of the zones within which the development may influence or effect the landscape character and visual amenity.

1.1.20 The figure below shows the ZTV using a DTM 'bare earth' model. This is the theoretical visibility of the development in the surrounding landscape. The locations of the views noted below are marked and numbered for reference.

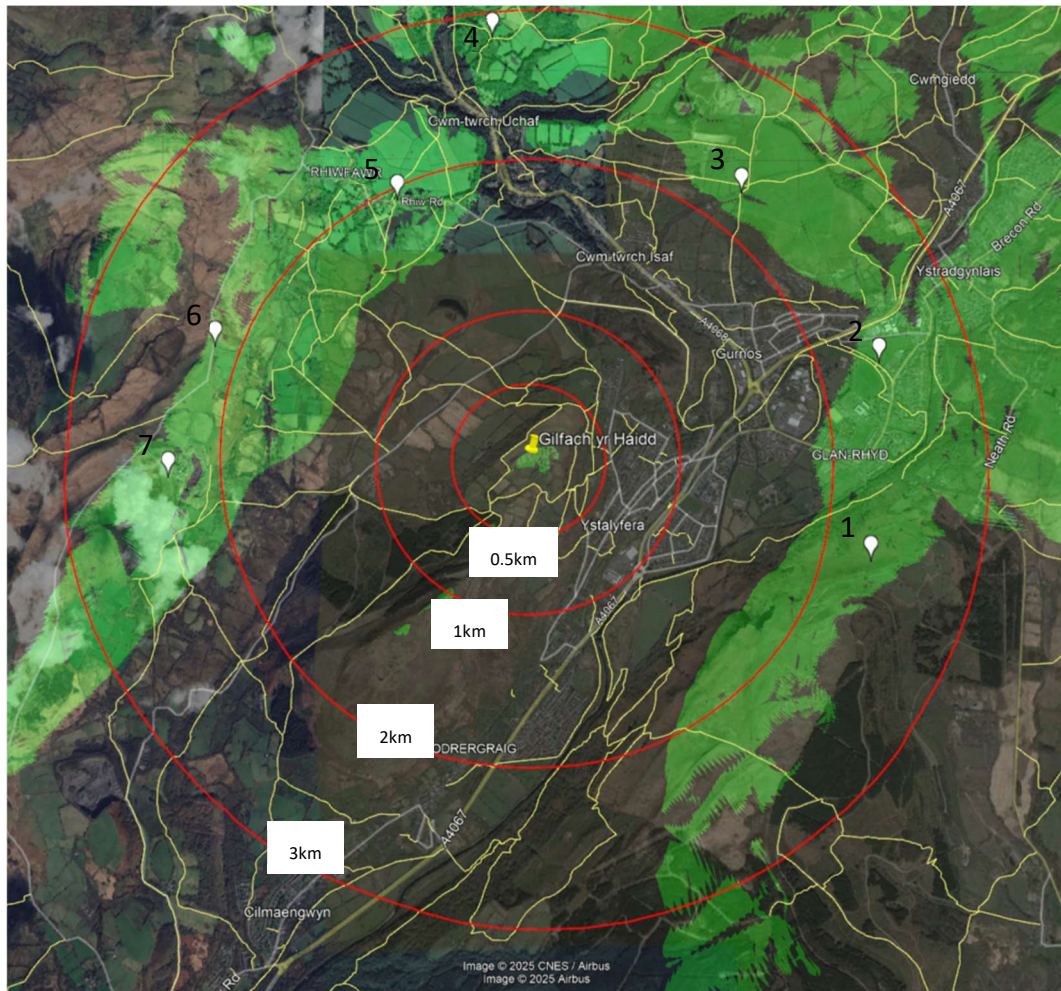


Figure 2: ZTV of the site

Key Viewpoints

- 1.1.21 The visibility of the site is dependent on a range of factors, including location of the viewpoint, distance of view, the angle of the sun, time of year etc. Also of importance is whether the site is seen completely or in part of the skyline, where land provides a backcloth and where there is a complex foreground or an expansive landscape surrounding the view. The aspect of the development and whether viewed from the front or the side is also important.
- 1.1.22 Using the ZTV model a series of key viewpoints were identified. They are at varying distances from the site. These are outlined in Table 1 and shown on the map in Figure 2.
- 1.1.23 Aside from the access track which is a PRow (ref 18/137.lgk/1), not well utilised, passing through the land. The site is most prominent from the upland areas to the north, east and west from approximately 2km away. These visible viewpoints

generally constitute small minor roads and PRow footpaths. No views of the site can be seen from the nearby settlement and urbanised area. The visual impact of the proposed development will be minor and will with the implemented landscape strategy the impact will be even less. Only long-range views will be seen, and at those distances the development will be seen as one of the pattern of existing sporadic farmsteads across the upland area.

1.1.24 They are assessed one by one below.

No.	Location	Distance and direction view	Easting	Northing	Rationale for selection
1	Footpath east of site	2.3km, W	278147	208303	Users of PRow
2	Footpath east of site	2.4km, NE	278233	209630	Users of PRow
3	Road NE of site	2.3km, NE	277344	210759	Users of road
4	Track north of site	2.8km, N	275722	211865	Users of road
5	Road NW of site	1.9km, NW	275074	210771	Users of road
6	Road NW of site	2.1km, NW	273869	209816	Users of road
7	Road west of site	2.3km, W	273425	209176	Users of road

Table 1: Key Viewpoints

Mitigation of Impact

1.1.25 The hardstanding and containers with the roof cover will be visible from short sections of PRow 18/137.lgk/1 as it passes through the land. These are clearly a change in the landscape. This is functional farming infrastructure and appears as such, it is also readily removable. The proposed planting of sections of willow coppice between the hardstanding area and the path and the replanting and thickening of hedges proposed will provide screening within a few years which will help mitigate the visual impact. Very few people currently use the track as a footpath and topology screens the area from further along the path so impacts are local and limited.

1.1.26 The siting and design of the dwelling and its ancillary buildings mitigates against their visual impact as follows:

- They are sited in a depression where existing topography screens them.

- They are only visible in long views of 1.9 km and more
- Proposed planting will screen them.
- They are low single-story structures with flat roofs.
- The PV array is sited at low level so as to not create a glare that might be visible. It will be screened from view by the tree planting along the hedge to the south and east. .
- The timber cladding will silver with age and blend well with the natural colours of the landscape.
- There is no paved access track to the buildings.
- All buildings will have plants growing up the vertical walls softening their appearance.
- There will be no permanent outdoor lighting.
- Indoor lighting will be designed to be downward and inward pointing.
- All windows will be fitted with blackout blinds.
- The small domestic wind turbine proposed will be mounted by the west end of the solar store on a standard scaffolding pole mast guyed with cables. The turbine is 1.58m diameter. It will be mounted 6m above the ground level. This very small domestic turbine will not intrude into the identified views and have negligible impact on the landscape character.
- Section 7 of the MP and drawing number 'P125-P-601 Proposed land management' show mitigation hedge planting and strengthening.

Key Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1

- 1.1.27 The photograph from Viewpoint 1 was taken from high ground on a private track to the east of the site. The eastern slope of the site can be seen, and the dwelling and outbuildings will be visible in the landscape as indicated by the arrow, increasingly screened over time by the re-planted thickened hedge lines. All other development will be located on the western slope and will not be visible from this viewpoint. The visual impact will be minimal as this is not a public viewpoint and there will be few visual receptors. The proposed landscape hedge strengthening and new planting described in Section 7 of the MP and shown on drawing number 'P125-P-601 Proposed land management', will mitigate the visual impact of the development. Other farmsteads can be seen dotted along the upland areas throughout the valley and adjacent valleys.



Figure 3: Photograph from Viewpoint 1

Viewpoint 2

- 1.1.28 Viewpoint 2 is located at lower level on a footpath next to sports playing fields. The lower reaches of the eastern slopes of the site can be seen, however the proposed development will not be seen from this viewpoint due to topology and will therefore have no visual impact.



Figure 4: Photograph from Viewpoint 2

Viewpoint 3

- 1.1.29 The photograph from Viewpoint 3 was taken at slightly lower elevation than the site on a road northeast of the site. It was through a break in the vegetation. The site is not discernible from this viewpoint and will therefore have no visual impact.



Figure 5: Photograph from Viewpoint 3

Viewpoint 4

- 1.1.30 Upon trying to visit Viewpoint 4 it was discovered that the track was a private track and is barred to members of the public. There will be very few visual receptors from here and coupled with the distance away from the site will result in a negligible visual impact.

Viewpoint 5

- 1.1.31 The photograph at Viewpoint 5 was taken at high elevation from a break in the vegetation along a road north of the site. Fleeting views of the west of the site can be seen, but the site is difficult to discern from this viewpoint. The proposed development on the eastern slopes will have negligible visual impact as it will be screened by the treeline. Partial views of the top of the proposed development will be seen where there is breaks in the vegetation along the side of the road but the visual impact from this viewpoint will be negligible.

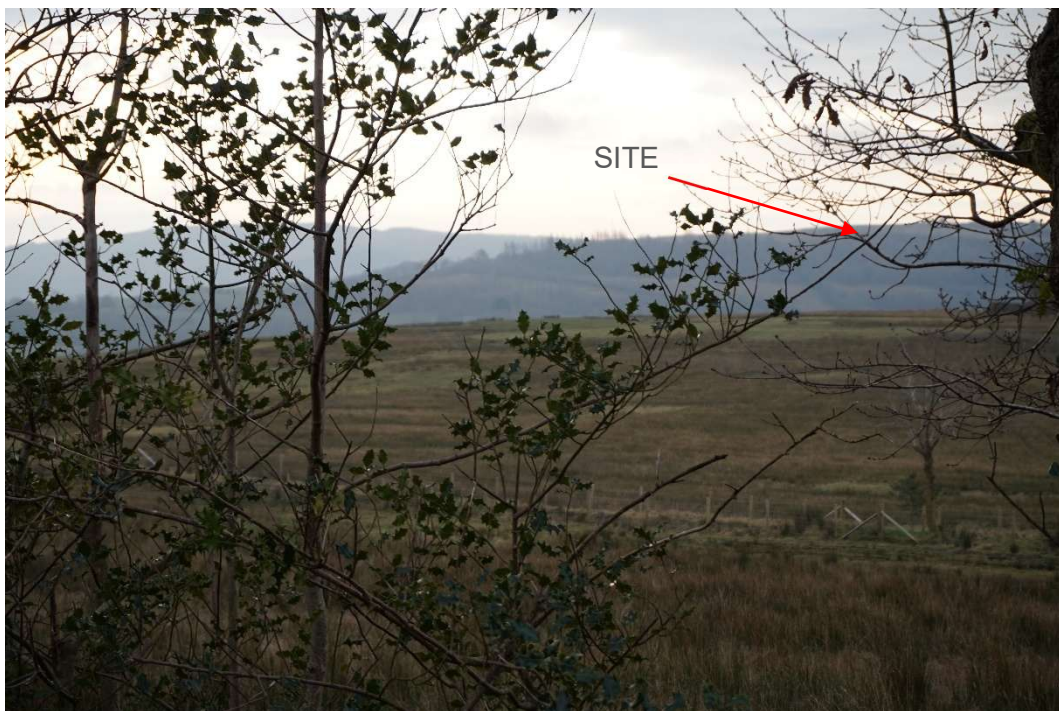


Figure 6: Photograph from Viewpoint 5

Viewpoint 6

- 1.1.32 The western part of the site is visible from this viewpoint. The proposed development on the eastern slope will be partly screened by the topology and treeline in front of it with the roof visible. Whilst there will be some visual impact from this it will introduce a negligible visual change to the landscape. Other farmsteads and associated buildings are present throughout the valley sides, and one can be seen directly beneath the site.



Figure 7: Photograph from Viewpoint 6

Viewpoint 7

- 1.1.33 The photograph from Viewpoint 7 was taken on a road west of the site on the opposite upland area. The western slopes of the site can be seen in the distance, but the site itself is difficult to discern. The proposed development on the eastern slopes will be partially screened with some long-range views of the roof of the proposed dwelling, but the visual impact of this will be minimal as views are over a large distance. Other farmsteads and associated buildings are visible, dotted throughout the upland areas and valley sides. The proposed development will not be out of keeping with the existing development in the area.



Figure 8: Photograph from Viewpoint 7

Baseline Photographs of the site

- 1.1.34 The following photographs are taken close to and from within the site to record the current state of the land so as to provide a visual baseline of the impact of the proposed development and land management.

1.1.35 The locations of the points where the photographs were taken are shown in Figure 9 below.



Figure 9 Location of photographs within land

1.1.36 Figure 10 below shows the containers and hardstanding which is inset into the western slope adjacent to the site access. The containers sit below the horizon, screened by vegetation and were not discernible in photographs 5,6 or 7.



Figure 10 containers and hardstanding near the entrance to the site

- 1.1.37 Figure 11 below shows the proposed site of the OPD dwelling and ancillary buildings (located in red). It can be seen how they sit in a natural depression in the land which reduces their visual impact.



Figure 11 view of dwelling site showing weakness of the existing hedges which will be strengthened.

- 1.1.38 Figure 12 below shows the proposed site of the OPD dwelling and ancillary buildings (located in red) in context with the whole field from further north east. The new hedge proposed to divide fields 3 and 4 will sit on the ridge between the fence post to the right of the applicants and the utility pole on the horizon. This will provide screening to the buildings over time from views from the west and north west.



Figure 12



Fig 13 - ALLTYGRUG FARM ROAD LEADING TO THE SITE



Fig 14 - PUBLIC HIGHWAY LEADING TO THE SITE, SITE ENTRANCE ON THE RIGHT



Fig 15 - ACCESS TO THE OPD LAND ON THE LEFT ALONG PRoW



Fig 16 - ACCESS TO THE OPD LAND WITH EXISTING WOODLANDS IN OWNERSHIP



Fig 17 - VIEW OF THE OPD LAND LOOKING GENERALLY SOUTH-WEST



Fig 18 - VIEW OF THE OPD LAND LOOKING GENERALLY SOUTH



Fig 20 - VIEW OF THE OPD LAND LOOKING GENERALLY NORTH-EAST



Fig 21 - VIEW OF THE OPD LAND LOOKING GENERALLY NORTH