

Landscape Matters – Supplementary Note

September 2020

Introduction

1. This note has been prepared by Savills in support of Bridgend College's ongoing promotion of surplus land at their Pencoed College as a site for a mixed use development. The scope of this note reflects discussions with BCBC Officers, who confirmed that a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment was not required at this stage. As such, this note has been prepared to identify any statutory and non-statutory landscape designations relevant to the site and set out how the masterplanning process undertaken to date has sought to minimise any possible effects on landscape character and visual amenity.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designations

2. The current LDP Proposals Map for the site is replicated below at Insert A.

Insert A: Extract of current LDP Proposals Map



3. The Local Development Plan (LDP) makes two landscape based designations:
 - Special Landscape Areas (SLA) are a local level landscape designation. The site is neither within or on the boundary of an SLA with the nearest SLA being approximately 2.5km north of the settlement of Pencoed and separated by areas of built development.
 - The Glamorgan Heritage Coast runs for 14 miles along the southern coast of the Vale of Glamorgan and Bridgend. This is located on the southwestern side of Bridgend and is therefore distant from the site.
4. There are no listed buildings within the parcel of surplus land that is being promoted by Bridgend College for allocation within the Replacement LDP. The nearest listed buildings are Tregroes House and the bridge located on the driveway leading to the House which are located within the portion of the Pencoed Campus which has an active role in delivering educational services and is to be retained. No part of the site is located within a Conservation Area.

5. There are five trees within the main site (directly south of Tregroes House) subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs).

LANDMAP

6. LANDMAP is a Wales wide resource (maintained by Natural Resources Wales) that identifies and evaluates key landscape characteristics. The site is located within the 'Vale of Glamorgan' National Landscape Character Area.
7. Landscape quality is assessed against five criteria. These are then placed on a scale of 'Outstanding', 'High', 'Moderate', and 'Low'. The evaluation of the site against the five criteria is set out in the table below (source: NRS Wales environmental information portal):

Landscape Quality	Reference	Evaluation
Geological Landscape	CYNONGL040 Lower Ogwr Valley	Moderate / Low
Landscape Habitats	CYNONLH101 – no name	Moderate
Visual and Sensory	CYNONVS982 – Pencoed and CYNONVS572 Hendre	Moderate / Low
Historic Landscape	CYNONHL946 – H15 Pencoed & Coychurch transport corridor	Moderate
Cultural Landscape	CYNONCLS130 – Pencoed and CYNONCLS065 Hendre	Moderate

8. The nature of LANDMAP means that parcels of land are rated on the basis of the above five criteria rather than a single measure and so accordingly it is not possible to definitively compare the landscape value of different parcels of land. However, it is clear that none of the identified landscape qualities are considered to be outstanding or high. A detailed LVIA would be required to accompany a planning application for the proposed development which would provide a detailed assessment of the detailed development proposal against these landscape qualities.

Landscape Character Assessment for Bridgend County Borough

9. A Landscape Character Assessment for Bridgend County Borough was prepared by LUC and published in July 2013. The document provides guidance on landscape character and, following the adoption of the Local Development Plan, supplements the Green Infrastructure, Biodiversity and Landscape Supplementary Planning Guidance.
10. The Assessment categorises undeveloped land into 15 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). The western part of the site is shown as being within an urban area (and is therefore not categorised) whilst the eastern half of the site is within the "Hirwaun Common and Surrounding Ridges" LCA which is almost entirely located north of the settlement of Pencoed.
11. For the Hirwaun Common and Surrounding Ridges LCA, the following six landscape sensitivities are identified:
- Open, unenclosed commons;
 - Large expanses of semi-natural habitat;
 - Bands of wet woodland and tree lines;

- Nationally important archaeological features;
 - Strong rural character; and
 - Extensive views from ridges.
12. Save for the fact that any undeveloped parcel of land inherently can be seen as having a more rural character given that it is presently undeveloped, none of the six landscape sensitivities are strongly evident across the site. As noted above, the LVIA required to support a planning application would show how the sites character (which is semi-rural and has evidence of urban fringe characteristics) will be affected, and how long-distance views into the site could be affected. This assessment would take into account mitigation measures, such as new tree planting, to be advanced through the masterplanning process to inform a planning application.

Indicative Masterplan

13. The Masterplan Report, prepared by Austin-Smith:Lord and submitted to BCBC in April 2020 shows that there a relatively small amount of woodland existing on the site, albeit there is a network of native hedgerows with small areas of plantation woodland, ruderal vegetation, bracken and scrub. A stream bordered by semi-natural broadleaved woodland forms part of the eastern site boundary. With reference to the ecological value of the existing vegetation on site and the need to deliver optimum capacity of the site, where possible, these areas of vegetation and existing trees can be integrated into the masterplan.
14. In addition, the scheme will include comprehensive landscaping proposition, which could see the vegetation on the site's eastern boundary being bolstered with additional planting to soften this boundary. The Masterplan show a network of new green public open spaces and attenuation ponds / lakes.
15. It should also be noted that building heights are generally limited to 2-2.5 storeys in keeping with a semi-rural landscape. A row of 3 storey apartments are proposed to be located on the eastern part of the site, adjacent to the A473, so that the impact of this additional height is minimised.
16. The Masterplan is sensitive to the location of the Listed Building and TPO's within the College Campus.

Summary and Conclusions

17. The site is not subject to any local or national, statutory or non-statutory landscape designations, albeit there are listed buildings and TPOs on the edge of the site.
18. Development of the site is not considered to undermine any of the six landscape sensitivities that are identified as typifying the Hirwuan Common and Surrounding Ridges Landscape Character Area. A detailed, LVIA would be prepared to inform and accompany further masterplanning work (i.e. as part of an outline planning application) in due course and will inherently be based on a more advanced and detailed scheme.
19. Notwithstanding this, as shown on the Masterplan, inherently, mitigation such as new planting, landscape buffers and sensitive design has been considered to date, and will be taken forward as the Masterplan evolves to inform a planning application. It is clear however that, as per the details set out above, there is no particular or significant landscape constraint which would restrict the development of the site.