



Land South of the B4235, Bayfields, Chepstow

On behalf of Barratts & David Wilson Homes South Wales Ltd

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Prepared by

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FINAL

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Anthony Jellard Associates have been commissioned by Barratts David Wilson Homes South Wales (BDWSW) to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) in support of an outline planning application for a proposed residential development at Bayfields, Chepstow.

1.2 A series of Pre-Application (Pre-App) meetings took place with Monmouthshire County Council. In an email dated 29.03.18, the planning officer confirmed:

"... that as officers we will support the principle of residential development on this site up to the 90m contour and that we will consider development up to the 94th subject to its justification on visual grounds being proven through a LVIA".

This LVA considers relevant landscape and visual issues and potential effects in relation to the development. The assessment also addresses the particular issues raised by the Council of in relation to the extent of development on the upper slopes of the site.

1.3 A number of field surveys were carried out jointly by two highly experienced chartered landscape architects, David McQuitty CMLI and Tony Jellard CMLI . This is consistent with current best practice guidance contained within the *"Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact assessment"* (GLVIA 3rd Edition, 2013), which advise that:

'Professional judgement is a very important part of LVIA. Ideally, and especially for complex projects, more than one person should be involved in the assessment to provide checks and balances, especially in defining the significant effects likely to influence decisions.' (p.22)

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 This LVA has been prepared with reference to guidance, as far as it is appropriate to an appraisal of this nature, contained in:

- *"Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact assessment"* (GLVIA 3rd Edition, 2013), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Management and Environmental Assessment

GLVIA notes that, in an appraisal such as this for the proposed Bayfields development, *'the process is informal and there is more flexibility in the approach that is taken [compared to a full LVIA] but the essence of the approach still applies'*.

Study Area

2.2 The study area for the appraisal has been defined in accordance with the guidance provided in the GLVIA 3rd edition, 2013, which advises that the study area for a landscape assessment needs to cover *"the site itself and the full extent of the wider landscape context around it which the proposed development may influence in a significant manner"*.

- 2.3 The Study Area for the LVA is based on an identified computer-generated indicative Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) shown in the *Appendix Illustrations, Figure AJA/03*. The ZTV identifies the approximate area of land from which there would be potential views of the proposed development. This is based on an analysis of the topographic data to assess theoretical visibility, assuming bare ground. The Study Area was then modified by detailed field observations and analysis, which take account of intervening features such as woodlands, trees, hedgerows and buildings.
- 2.4 A ZTV has been considered within a radius of up to 4 kms from the site boundary .
- 2.5 Wherever possible, the analysis has been objective, the residual effects quantified, and any subjective judgements have been described in clearly defined terms. Both objective analysis and subjective professional judgements are required for effective, high quality landscape and visual analysis.

Surveys

- 2.6 Detailed desktop surveys were carried out of published material on the landscape of the site and its wider context. Material included maps, photographic evidence, historic landscape and cultural data. Fieldwork enabled the recording of various landscape elements such as topography, land use and vegetation. From the analysis of this combination of material, it was possible to carry out an evaluation of landscape character and assess the predicted effect of the proposed development.

Assumptions

- 2.7 Reference to “the site” should be interpreted as the area contained within the red line drawn to identify the planning application boundary.
- 2.8 All visual assessment field survey work has been undertaken from within publicly accessible areas only: where it was considered advantageous to inform the visual assessment, views from private properties and commercial buildings are approximate and have been estimated, with reference to the nearest publicly-accessible location from which assessment could reasonably take place.

Assessment Viewpoints

- 2.9 A series of potential viewpoints (*see Appendix, Figures AJA04- 16 inclusive*) was based on desktop analysis of mapped information, and analysis of the ZTV. The viewpoints were selected to be representative of the various groups of receptors, the views of which may be affected by the proposed development. The focus, when selecting viewpoints, was on ‘*likely significant effects*’ and taking ‘*an approach that is proportional to the scale of the project that is being assessed*’, in line with GLVIA3 as current best practice guidance; although it should be noted that the term ‘significant’ is not defined within this guidance, nor indeed within the Environmental Assessment Regulations where a formal landscape and visual impact assessment is required. This approach involves using professional judgement and, for this

appraisal, we have identified potential locations from where possible *substantial* effects could occur. These candidate viewpoints were then reviewed in the field and refined as necessary.

Landscape Sensitivity (Susceptibility to Change)

- 2.10 The term 'landscape receptor' means an element or a group of elements which will be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Landscape receptors are physical elements or attributes of the landscape that could be affected by the development, such as landscape character, landform, water courses, woodland, groups of trees or hedgerows, land uses and field boundaries.
- 2.11 Landscape receptors are assessed in terms of their 'Landscape Sensitivity'. This combines judgements on the value to be attached to the landscape and the susceptibility to change of the landscape from the type of change or development proposed.
- 2.12 Prior to the advent of the landscape character assessment procedure now used by local authorities, the sensitivity of a given landscape receptor was often defined in terms of landscape value, which took the form of national planning designations - such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - or local designations, such as Areas of Great Landscape Value or Special Landscape Areas. Recent assessment guidance has placed greater emphasis on those landscapes which do not benefit from national or local designations, but which may be valued locally for particular reasons. In assessing the value of a given landscape, we have used the range of factors which can be taken into consideration as listed in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3, insofar as they relate to the particular landscape context.
- 2.13 The sensitivity of landscape receptors is defined in *Table 1, below*:

Table 1: Sensitivity of Landscape Receptors

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

Low	An area with a poorly defined sense of place, and/or landscape character in poor condition, often not valued for its scenic quality; or a feature of low intrinsic value [such as trees and species poor hedges of no special quality or function]; or a landscape or feature that is tolerant of change of the type identified.
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Magnitude of Landscape Effect

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

Table 2: Magnitude of Landscape Effect

Category	Description
Major adverse landscape effect	The proposals will be at <i>complete variance</i> with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape, and/or would <i>diminish or destroy</i> the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Moderate adverse landscape effect	The proposals will be <i>at odds</i> with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and/or would cause a <i>noticeable diminution</i> of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Minor adverse landscape effect	The proposals will <i>not quite fit into</i> the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and/or would cause a <i>perceptible diminution</i> of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings.
Negligible adverse landscape effect	The proposals will create a <i>barely perceptible diminution of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings</i> .
No change	The proposals will <i>not cause any change</i> to the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape.
Negligible landscape beneficial effect	The proposals will provide a <i>barely perceptible enhancement of the integrity of characteristic features and their settings</i> .
Minor landscape beneficial benefit	The proposals will achieve a <i>degree of fit</i> with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and <i>make a minor contribution to enhancing</i> the character, sense of place or integrity of the landscape.
Moderate landscape beneficial effect	The proposals <i>will fit well with</i> the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and would <i>noticeably enhance</i> the character, sense of place or integrity of the landscape.
Major landscape beneficial effect	The proposals <i>will fit very well</i> with the scale, landform, pattern or character of the landscape and would <i>restore</i> the character, sense of place or scale of the landscape.

Sensitivity of Visual Receptors (Susceptibility to Change)

- 2.15 The term 'visual receptor' means people - individuals and/or defined groups of people who have the potential to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposals. Visual receptors are at accessible viewpoints, the sensitivity of which would be dependent on the location, the activity of the viewer and the importance of the view. These would include viewpoints available to the users of outdoor facilities, sporting activities and users of public rights of way; viewpoints from landscape features and beauty spots; viewpoints outside local properties (which would represent the view for local residents); and viewpoints available to people travelling through the landscape. Views may be glimpsed and fleeting, or open and sustained.
- 2.16 The determination of the sensitivity of the visual receptors is a matter of professional judgement. The GLVIA 3rd edition, 2013, recommend that the assessment of sensitivity will be dependent on:
- the location and context of a viewpoint;
 - the expectations and occupation or activity of the viewer;
 - the importance of the view (which may be determined with respect to its popularity or the numbers of people affected, its appearance in guidebooks, on tourist maps, and in the facilities provided for its enjoyment and references to it in literature or art); and
 - the scale of the view and the extent of visibility.

Table 3: Sensitivity of Visual Receptors (Susceptibility to Change)

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

- 2.17 The magnitude of visual effects depends on factors such as distance, the time of day, the prevailing weather conditions, elevation and aspect, as well as the context of the view. The predicted level of effect has been assessed during good visibility and light conditions, therefore with the best possible view of the proposals. Allowance has also been made for the likely visibility of the proposed development during the winter aspect; that is, without the

presence of leaves on deciduous vegetation and its consequential contribution to screening effects and the framing of views.

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

Table 4: Magnitude of Visual Effect

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

Assessment of Overall Level of Effect

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

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

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

Magnitude	Sensitivity		
	High	Medium	Low
Major	Major Adverse/Beneficial	Major-Moderate Adverse/Beneficial	Moderate-Minor Adverse/Beneficial
Moderate	Major-Moderate Adverse/Beneficial	Moderate – Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor Adverse/Beneficial
Minor	Moderate – Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor Adverse/Beneficial	Minor - Negligible
Negligible	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible

3. BASELINE CONDITIONS

3.1 The baseline condition information is built up by a process which combines the results of desktop research with those of detailed field observation and analysis.

Location and Land Use

3.2 The site lies on the north-western edges of Chepstow to the south of the B4235 road. Broadly rectangular in shape, the site area is circa 11.74 hectares in extent. The site consists of two fields currently managed as grassland.

3.3 Modern housing estates are to the east of the site, separated by an existing landscape buffer. Further housing is located to the north-east and south-west of the site.

3.4 A single agricultural field is immediately to the south of the site and agricultural land within the Wye Valley AONB lies to the west.

Topography

3.4 The land slopes northwards and westwards from a high point of around 103m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the south-east corner of the site and this landform is part of the wider undulating topography of the area. Levels drop down to around 81m AOD near the south-east corner at the boundary with the AONB, rising gently along this boundary to around 89m AOD at the corner of Great Barnett's Wood before then falling - gently at first, and then more steeply - to the B4235 road frontage where levels are approximately 70m AOD.

Existing Vegetation

- 3.6 The fields consist of species-poor grassland. Hedgerows are of moderate to low quality, generally unmanaged and with substantial gaps. However, some sections contain a proportion of tree cover.
- 3.7 Bishop's Barnet Wood is a strong landscape feature along the north-western boundary of the site, and forms part of extensive areas of woodland in the wider landscape. Pasture and arable fields form the rest of the western boundary with the site.

Existing Buildings and Structures

- 3.8 The only structure on site is a derelict agricultural barn located on the higher ground near the south-eastern boundary. A large electrical substation is a prominent feature to the east, contiguous with the northern part of the site.
- 3.9 The site is surrounded on the majority of three sides by the built form of the expanding modern residential edge of Chepstow. The proximity of this development, including the recently completed 'Grange' development site, has a strong influence on the site character, giving a strong 'urban-edge' feel to the locality.

Public Rights of Way, Designated Access Land and Public Open Space

- 3.10 Public rights of way run along the site's northern boundary and just beyond the western boundary. These form part of the wider local network of footpaths and dedicated Access Land; Great Barnet's and Bishop's Barnet's Woods fall into this latter category. There are areas of public open space along the eastern boundary of the site and a Locally-Equipped Area of Play is located just beyond the south-eastern boundary.

Public Roads

- 3.11 The site is accessed off the B4235 on the northern boundary. A little further north the B4293, Itton Road, meets the edge of Chepstow at the roundabout beside the Listed gates to Piercefield Park. Running north from this roundabout, past the racecourse, is the A466. Another major road, the A48, passes more than a kilometre to the south of the site. There are a number of access roads within the various residential areas located around the site.

Landscape Designations

- 3.12 Part of the southernmost area of the Wye Valley AONB lies immediately adjacent to the western site boundary.
- 3.13 A section of the southern end of the site lies within an area designated in the Monmouthshire LDP as an 'Area of Amenity Importance'. (There is also an ecological designation of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation in the northern corner).

- 3.14 The site is not located within a Conservation Area and the site does not contain any Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments. However, there a number of these designations in the site vicinity, including:

Registered Parks and Gardens include: Piercefield Park, Mounton, Wyelands, St Pierre Park, Shirenewton Hall

Wye Valley Registered Historic Landscape

Listed Buildings include: Lion Gates and Lodges Chepstow Racecourse, Itton Court

SAMS include: Bishop's Barnet Wood Camp – earthworks

Landscape Character Assessment

- 3.15 'Landscape character' is defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements that occur consistently in a landscape and how people perceive it. It reflects combinations of geology, landform, soils, vegetation and land-use, and human settlement. It creates the 'sense of place' of different areas of the landscape.
- 3.16 The LANDMAP system has been developed specifically for the assessment of character in the landscape of Wales. Landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated in a consistent way and this data base is used by planning authorities in their decision-making process on planning applications
- 3.17 LANDMAP places the site within the Visual and Sensory Aspect Area **Chepstow Woods MNMTHVS044**. This Aspect Area is classified as *Lowland/Rolling Lowland/Mosaic Rolling Lowland (Level 3)*. The summary description of the land within this character type is quoted below:

"A gently rolling landscape, with long views towards the Severn Estuary from Shirenewton and adjacent highland... Varied and diverse in character, with a mixture of arable and pastoral farming, becoming more intensively cultivated with a neat and clean appearance... On the flat valley floor around Caerwent, and south of Llanvair-Discoed larger more regular fields are enclosed by low intensively managed hedgerows, in places their breakdown resulting in their replacement with intrusive lines of post and wire fencing... Individual mature field trees and occasional hedgerow trees are characteristic of this area, sheltered and enclosed by the wooded slopes of Carrow Hill and the Cwm... To the north around St Arvans these medium to large-scale fields of improved pasture become more enclosed where Mounton Brook cuts a steeply incised course through a heavily wooded valley... and south of Llanvair Discoed larger more regular fields are enclosed by low intensively managed hedgerows, in places their breakdown resulting in their replacement with intrusive lines of post and wire fencing... Individual mature field trees and occasional hedgerow trees are characteristic of this area, sheltered and enclosed by the wooded slopes of Carrow Hill and the Cwm... To the north around St Arvans these medium to large-scale fields of improved pasture become more enclosed where Mounton Brook cuts a steeply incised path through a heavily wooded valley... Ancient, semi-natural and mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland cling precariously to these steep valley sides, which link Itton and Mounton... Remnant parkland is also

characteristic of this landscape, where the avenues of mature trees line narrow roads of private entrances... High stone walls form the boundary for country estates often merging with and reflected in the surrounding villages, in particular Shirenewton, defined by the unspoilt traditional cottages of old red sandstone...."

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'high' value. The *Justification of Overall Evaluation* notes that:

"A high-quality landscape of picturesque quality with a strongly wooded character and long views over the Severn estuary... The area is generally in good condition with a consistent character... The strongly wooded character of the rolling hilltops gives the area a visual unity... The character of the area is relatively rare in Monmouthshire with woods on rolling hilltops"

- 3.18 LANDMAP places the site within the Cultural Landscape Aspect Area **Lower Gwent (Iscoed) MNMTHCLO07**. This Aspect Area is classified at Level 4 as *Associations/Notional Expressions/Places/Sense of Place (Level 4)*. The summary description is as follows:

"Historically larger, the area is now truncated by the revised county boundary to the west. Its character owes much to history, being a control zone between the comparative lawlessness of Silurian Wentwood and the rich farmlands of the Gwent Levels, with extensive monastic and Marcher landholdings to the eastern end. There is a proliferation of prehistoric earthworks, several mediaeval fortifications, evidence of small-scale mediaeval and industrial development (milling) in the place names along the Troggy and Mounton Brooks, and monastic landholdings. It has a strong sense of place."

The *Justification of Overall Evaluation* of 'high' states that it is:

"High as a relatively unspoiled evolved historic landscape"

Again, the site's cultural context is very much influenced by the adjoining settlement of Chepstow with its own strong cultural identity (MNMTHCLO17 Chepstow) rated as 'outstanding in the LANDMAP evaluation.

- 3.19 LANDMAP places the site within Historic Landscape Aspect Area. **Wye Valley MNMTHHLO18** This Aspect Area is classified as *Rural environment/Agricultural/Other fieldscapes (Level 3)*. The summary description is as follows:

" Site Location the River Wye, which flows N-S along the eastern boundary of the county, is enclosed within a steep-sided and densely wooded valley, with broad floodplains in places. The Aspect Area encompasses that section of the Wye Valley extending S from the limestone rock formation on the border with Herefordshire as far as the Angiddy Valley and the northernmost extent of the Tintern Abbey estates. A section of Offa's Dyke, the early medieval linear earthwork dating from the 8th century, runs along the eastern flank of the Wye Valley while the Trellech Plateau is situated to the W. Historical Overview The Aspect Area lies within the Lower Wye Valley Landscape of Outstanding Historic Interest encompassing Symonds Yat, Monmouth and Chepstow (Cadw, 1998, 66-9). The Wye Valley has a very long history of human

occupation, although the heavily wooded nature of the valley and re-use of the most favourably located sites for settlement in the medieval and later periods has probably masked or destroyed much of the earlier evidence. King Arthur's Cave and Merlin's Cave on the northern margin of the area have both revealed evidence of Upper Palaeolithic occupation and flint artefacts dating from the Mesolithic period have been found at these sites and at the nearby Madawg rock shelter, located close to the Seven Sisters limestone rock formation on the upper part of the S-facing side of the main Wye Valley gorge. Cowrie shells, which were probably used to make necklaces or to adorn clothing, have been found at both cave sites (Aldhouse-Green, 2000, 36). These appear to have been collected along the margins of the Bristol Channel and traded inland along the Wye corridor. In terms of industrial activity, ironworking was a feature of the area probably from the later prehistoric period onwards. A Roman furnace found at Little Hadnock, a settlement located on a terrace above the Wye floodplain to the NE of Monmouth (SO 5358 1526), has been dated to the 2nd -3rd ce)."

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* states that:

"The Wye Valley largely retains the historical pattern of settlement established during the late medieval and early post-medieval periods with the development of industrial activity based on the tributary valleys of the Angiddy and the Whitebrook. These communities became reliant on the Wye for the transportation of goods until the opening of the A466 road in the early 19th century. Extensive woodland was exploited for charcoal production and contributed to the scenic quality that attracted late 18th century artists and writers in search of the picturesque. The river itself, although still of economic importance to the valley's communities, is today principally of amenity value.

- 3.20 LANDMAP places the site in the Geological Landscape Aspect Area **St Arvans MNMTHGL068**. This Aspect Area is classified as *Lowland hills and valleys/Dissected lowland plateau/Lowland plateau (Level 3)*. The entry for geographical and topographical character of the area contains the following description:

"Slightly undulating platform of Carboniferous limestone NW and N of Chepstow and dissected by the Wye and Mounton Brook gorges. Platform rises gently northwards towards a feature made by sandstones of the underlying Upper Old Red Sandstone Group (Upper Devonian). Limestone forms a short escarpment only in the Sychbant Wood area."

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* notes as follows:

"Key area of limestone outcrop in the County with concentration of Geodiversity Audit sites (see Field 36) and SSSI (latter is Cave, however, with no surface expression)."

- 3.21 LANDMAP places the site within the Landscape Habitats Aspect **S. Rural Monmouthshire MNMTHLH105**. This Aspect Area is classified as *Dry (Relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/Grassland & Marsh/Improved Grassland (Level 3)*. It is described as:

“an extensive area of predominately farmland with improved grassland dominating but also a significant arable element.”

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of ‘moderate’ value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* states that:

“The area is generally quite low ecological value improved grassland but there are small pockets of more valuable habitat. the deciding factor in increasing the evaluation to moderate is the large number of key species records.”

Landscape Character within the Wye Valley AONB

3.22 The Wye Valley AONB Management Plan categorises the various character areas and landscape types into 16 Landscape Management Zones within the AONB. While the site does not lie within the AONB, its western and northern boundary are contiguous with the designated area. We have therefore identified the relevant Management Zone for this adjoining area as being *LMZ-16 Caerwent Limestone Plateau*. Key features are listed in Table 1 of the AONB Management Plan and are:

- Gently rolling landscape with occasional narrow, winding steep-sided valleys [SQ1]
- Ancient, semi-natural and mixed coniferous and deciduous woodland [SQ2]
- Mixture of arable and pastoral farming with traditional farmsteads and large country estates [SQ20]
- Remnant parkland of large country estates [SQ19]
- Long views towards the Severn Estuary are possible [SQ11]
- Nucleated village of St Arvans [SQ20]
- Chepstow Racecourse an important landscape at a local level [SQ19]

(NB the reference numbers included after each feature cross refer to the identified AONB Special Qualities.)

Monmouthshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study *(prepared for the Council by White Consultants, June 2010)*

3.23 This LVA takes account of *The Monmouthshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study June 2009*. This document formed part of the evidence base for the LDP site allocations. ‘*Local Landscape Character Areas*’ (LLCA’s) are defined around each settlement and then assessed following desktop and site analysis for their key characteristics, landscape sensitivity and their capacity for housing development.

3.24 The site falls within the southern end of ‘*LLCA C03 Chepstow*’. The key characteristics of this are described as:

- *Rolling hills and valleys of pastures with a mix of low cut and outgrown hedgerows enclosed by strong woodland cover to the west [Area C4] rising to open hill top surrounded by housing on three sides to the east.*
- *Scattered farmsteads and rural dwellings linked by minor roads and a*

number of public footpaths.

- *Fine longer views are possible to the south west over the AONB and valley of Mounton Brook.*
- *The northern part of the area forms an important and positive rural approach to the settlement from the north along the A466, complementing Chepstow racecourse gates and entrance which are listed.*
- *The settlement edge consists of housing estates to the south east with some commercial properties.*
- *The majority of the area to the north and west is within the Wye Valley AONB.*

3.25 The *Landscape sensitivity* is assessed as *High/medium* with the reasoning that the area

“... forms a positive rural approach to the settlement from the north along the A466 complementing Chepstow racecourse entrance, has intrinsic qualities as an undulating and hilly rural pastoral landscape enclosed by woodland at low levels but with long views over the AONB to the west. It also separates the settlement from Mounton and its Conservation Area and most of the area lies within the Wye Valley AONB”.

3.26 The *Housing capacity* is assessed as *Medium/low* with the justification that this is

“due to the positive approach from the north, the intrinsic qualities of the hillside pastoral landscape, long views over the AONB, the need to retain a gap between the settlement edge and Mounton and the location of the majority of the area within the AONB”.

3.27 The site does not lie within one of the two areas assessed around Chepstow as being of *high sensitivity* to housing development in the Monmouthshire Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study 2010. Rather, C03 is located in the rest of the environs of Chepstow where all the LLCA'S are evaluated as being of *high/medium* sensitivity. There is no lower sensitivity given to LLCA'S around Chepstow. However, in the case of the proposed development site, our view is that the *high/medium* sensitivity assessment may be too high, since it is not within the AONB and is immediately adjacent, on the majority of three sides, to the modern substantially residential urban edge of Chepstow. The large woodland blocks to the west visually enclose much of the site and reinforce the links of the site areas with urban Chepstow. Moreover, it should be noted that this study was published in 2010 and there have been further housing developments in the vicinity of Bayfields in the interim, which are likely to have reduced the sensitivity of the proposed site to development.

3.28 Furthermore C03 (and its southern neighbour C05), both on the north-western edges of the settlement are assessed as having *medium/low* housing capacity, as opposed to '*low*' capacity for all remaining land surrounding Chepstow.

3.35 Both the reasonings in support of the evaluations of '*sensitivity*' and '*capacity*' clearly indicate that LLCA C03 (along with possibly LLCAC05) is less sensitive and has more potential capacity

for housing development than elsewhere around Chepstow. The site at Bayfields is located in the part of the LLCA adjacent to existing housing and is visually contained by woodland to the west. It is not in the AONB like most of this LLCA and development would have no effect on the important role of *'retain[ing] a gap between the settlement edge and Moun[ain].'*

Landscape Receptor Sensitivity

3.36 Landscape sensitivity is defined by a number of factors and it does not necessarily follow that a highly-valued landscape or landscape feature will always be defined by a high sensitivity. Landscape designation is thus only one of a number of criteria that are considered in identifying the relative 'sensitivity' of the landscape to a particular type of proposed development. It should not be used in isolation. While having analysed the various published assessments of landscape character and sensitivity, we have also made our own assessment of the overall sensitivity of the existing landscape resource to the proposed development, based on the following representative criteria:

- Existing land use;
- Landscape scale and pattern;
- Landscape value and quality;
- Nature of views and degree of visual enclosure and openness;
- Landscape designations present; and
- Scope for mitigation.

3.37 The overall sensitivity of a landscape is categorised as high, moderate or low for the purposes of this assessment. *Table 6, below* provides information relating to the various criteria affecting landscape sensitivity, so as to identify a final overall level of sensitivity for the local landscape to be ascribed.

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

LANDSCAPE ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION
Land use	The site consists of two fields which are currently managed by grazing This is an edge-of-urban site with large areas of modern estate housing immediately adjacent along the majority of three sides, and some commercial uses. A large electricity substation is located immediately adjacent to the northern sector of the site. The western boundary abuts Great / Wood and open farmland.
Scale and pattern	Chepstow has grown greatly from its original historic core, having been extended in the mid to late 20 th century by large areas of modern estate housing. In spite of these changes, it still retains a nucleated settlement pattern. It is now one of the major settlements in Monmouthshire. The area to the west of the site opens out to a rural landscape which consists of a mosaic of large blocks of woodland and small pasture or arable fields. This is a medium to large scale landscape.
Value and Quality	The site's landscape and visual character is strongly influenced by its edge-of-settlement location. The large enclosing blocks of woodland to the north and west, strengthen the link with the settlement and reduce the

	connections of the site to the wider landscape. The current edge-of-settlement appearance is only of moderate quality with remnant field hedges and recent planting providing some limited enclosure for the modern estate housing.
Nature of views	Longer views into and around the site are limited by the undulating topography and the large blocks of woodland. There are long views out from the high point in the site to the surrounding rural landscape.
Landscape Designations	There are no specific landscape designations affecting the site. However, the Wye Valley AONB abuts the western boundary.
Scope for mitigation	The master planning layout keeps the proposed built development off the higher ground. This higher ground is proposed as an area for public open space. Existing boundary hedgerows are retained and reinforced with additional tree and shrub planting. New planting within the development would create attractive and well-functioning external spaces for users and assist in assimilating the site into the wider urban surroundings. It would also contribute to softening those areas of existing hard urban edge where there is an abrupt transition into open land, such as at The Grange site
Overall landscape sensitivity of site in relation to ability to accommodate development of the scale, nature and extent proposed	<p>Medium:</p> <p><i>Reasoning:</i></p> <p>The site lies mostly on the lower contours with housing development kept off the highest land. The extensive enclosing woodlands, to the west and north, have the effect of making the site not generally visually prominent. Where there are views in from the Wye Valley AONB, the proposed housing would mostly appear set against a backdrop of the existing built edges of Chepstow.</p> <p>Existing boundary hedgerows would be reinforced by additional planting and a new western boundary landscape buffer would provide a defensible edge against future development into the AONB. The structure of existing retained and new planting will further visually assimilate the development into the wider landscape.</p>

Visual Receptors

3.38 Various potential views within the study area have been identified from desktop research. These views were subsequently assessed in the field, photographically recorded and included in *Appendix Figures AJA/04 – AJA/16*, inclusive, as providing representative views of the proposed development in its landscape context. Listed below are brief descriptions of the main potential visual receptors.

- Residential receptors: The settlement edges of Chepstow as well as individual properties which are likely to experience potential effects
- Users of the PRoW system and Access Land
- Visual effects on the setting of the Wye Valley AONB
- Visual aspects of the setting of *Registered Parks and Gardens include: Piercefield Park, Mounton, Wyelands, St Pierre Park*
- *Listed buildings include: Lion Gates and Lodges Chepstow Racecourse*
- *SAMS include: Bishop's Barnet Wood Camp – earthworks*

- Users of the road network including the A466 in the approach to Chepstow from the north and the sections of the B4255 and B4293 close to the site.

Table 7: Viewpoint Sensitivities and Anticipated Effects

No	Location	Designation	Receptors	Sensitivity	Magnitude of Effect [During Construction/At Completion/With Mitigation]	Level of Effect [During Construction/At Completion/With Mitigation]
1	Edge of POS on south eastern site boundary	POS including LEAP	Recreational users, Residential	High	Moderate adverse Moderate adverse Minor adverse	Major-moderate Major-moderate Moderate-minor
2	On public footpath to south west of site near The Grange	PRoW, AONB	Recreational Residential	High	Moderate adverse Minor adverse Negligible adverse	Major-moderate Major-moderate Negligible
3	From existing LAP close to eastern edges of site by Coed Wallern	POS	Recreational	Medium	Major adverse Moderate adverse Moderate adverse	Major-moderate Moderate-minor Moderate-minor
4	From A466 near the Racecourse in the approach to Chepstow	AONB	Recreational Motorists	High	Moderate adverse Moderate adverse Minor adverse	Major-moderate Major-moderate Moderate-minor
5	From PRoW beside Itton Road Cophill	PRoW, AONB	Recreational Motorists	High	Minor adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Moderate-minor Negligible Negligible
6	From Crick Road south of Shirenewton	Unclassified Road	Motorists	Low	Negligible adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Negligible Negligible Negligible
7	Edge of Chepstow Park Wood by Park House	Public footpath, Open Access Land, AONB, Registered Park and Garden	Recreational Residential	High	Negligible adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Negligible Negligible Negligible
8	Edge of Chepstow Park Wood, north of Rogerstone Grange	Public byway, Open Access Land, AONB, Registered Park and Garden	Recreational	High	Negligible adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Negligible Negligible Negligible
9	From Eagle's Nest Promoted Viewpoint	Promoted viewpoint, AONB, Registered Historic Landscape,	Recreational	High	Negligible adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Negligible Negligible Negligible

		Registered Park and Garden				
10	From footpath within Piercefield Park	Registered Historic Park and Garden, PRoW, AONB	Recreational	High	Negligible adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Negligible Negligible Negligible
11	From in front of Piercefield House	Registered Historic Park and Garden, PRoW, AONB	Recreational	High	Negligible adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Negligible Negligible Negligible
12	View from former carriageway to Piercefield House looking south	Registered Historic Park and Garden, PRoW, AONB	Recreational	High	Minor adverse Negligible adverse Negligible adverse	Negligible Negligible Negligible

4. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 The elements of the proposed development are described in detail elsewhere in the application. It should be noted that the planning application is for outline consent and that all supporting information is indicative, with detailed landscape proposals forming part of a subsequent Reserved Matters application.

Mitigation

4.2 There are essentially two categories of mitigation measures:

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

This assessment of landscape and visual impact relates to residual impacts which remain with both primary and secondary mitigation measures in place.

4.3 Primary Measures for the proposed development include:

- The siting of the proposed development in a location which is already closely related to the urban edges of the north west side of Chepstow. There is already housing development on nearly 3 sides of the site as well as a large-scale substation on the north side;
- Restricting development from the more elevated and visible ground in the eastern sector of the site, as well as on the rising land immediately south of the access point from the B4235;
- Retention, reinforcement and management of many of the boundary hedgerows.

Secondary measures include:

- New planting for the public open spaces and throughout the housing areas, to enhance the setting and character of the development and play an important part in creating an attractive 'sense of place';
- Long term sustainable management for all the existing and proposed landscape features.

5. MAGNITUDE OF EFFECTS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

Assessment of Effects on the Landscape Resource

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

5.2 There will be effects on the landscape fabric of the site during the construction phase as a result of ground disturbance, temporary site works, machinery such as earthmovers, access tracks, etc. Disturbance will be short term and affected surfaces will be restored.

Effects on Landscape Character

LANDMAP

5.3 This Aspect Area is classified Chepstow Woods **Lowland/Rolling Lowland/Mosaic Rolling Lowland (Level 3)**

LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'high' value. The *Justification of Overall Evaluation notes that:*

"A high-quality landscape of picturesque quality with a strongly wooded character and long views over the Severn estuary... The area is generally in good condition with a consistent character... The strongly wooded character of the rolling hilltops gives the area a visual unity... The character of the area is relatively rare in Monmouthshire with woods on rolling hilltops"

5.4 Geographically, this is a very large Aspect Area and, while the description and evaluation are reasonable for the overall, it is less applicable to the site and its immediate surroundings. The landscape character of the site is strongly influenced by the adjoining urban development which falls within **V & S Aspect Area: Chepstow MNMTHVS065**, an area of *moderate* LANDMAP evaluation. Substantial woodland, which is characteristic of the Chepstow Woods Aspect Area, together with the rolling topography, further visually separate the site area from the wider Aspect Area. Therefore, a residual *negligible adverse* magnitude of effect is anticipated on the overall Chepstow Woods Aspect Area.

5.5 LANDMAP places the site within the Cultural Landscape Aspect Area **Lower Gwent (Iscoed)**

MNMTHCL007. The *Justification of Overall Evaluation of 'high'* states that it is:

"High as a relatively unspoiled evolved historic landscape"

Again, the site's cultural context is very much influenced by the adjoining settlement of Chepstow which has its own strong cultural identity (see *MNMTHCL017 Chepstow*) rated as 'outstanding' in the LANDMAP evaluation. It is considered that the development will have negligible effect on the Lower Gwent (Iscoed) Aspect Area, but there will be no overall loss of cultural value as the site becomes more firmly part of (*MNMTHCL017 Chepstow*) with its rating of 'outstanding' in the LANDMAP evaluation.

- 5.6 LANDMAP places the site within Historic Landscape Aspect Area **Wye Valley MNMTHHL018**. LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'High' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* states that:

"The Wye Valley largely retains the historical pattern of settlement established during the late medieval and early post-medieval periods with the development of industrial activity based on the tributary valleys of the Angiddy and the Whitebrook. These communities became reliant on the Wye for the transportation of goods until the opening of the A466 road in the early 19th century. Extensive woodland was exploited for charcoal production and contributed to the scenic quality that attracted late 18th century artists and writers in search of the picturesque. The river itself, although still of economic importance to the valley's communities, is today principally of amenity value".

The site area is adjacent to modern Chepstow with the outer, substantially residential areas of existing settlement on the majority of three sides. This relationship is a strong influence on the present site landscape character. There is no woodland on site and no visual linkage with the river Wye. Therefore, a negligible adverse magnitude of effect is anticipated from the development on this overall Historic Aspect Area.

- 5.7 LANDMAP places the site in the Geological Landscape Aspect Area **St Arvans MNMTHGL068**. LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'high' value but no specific geological features have been identified. Also, the development masterplan will require generally minor, locally moderate, cut and fill for the development. Therefore, a negligible adverse magnitude of effect is anticipated on this Geological Aspect Area.

- 5.8 LANDMAP places the site within the Landscape Habitats Aspect **S. Rural Monmouthshire MNMTHLH105**. LANDMAP classifies this Aspect Area as being of 'moderate' value. The *Justification of the Overall Evaluation* states that:

"The area is generally quite low ecological value improved grassland but there are small pockets of more valuable habitat. the deciding factor in increasing the evaluation to moderate is the large number of key species records."

The agriculturally-improved grazed grassland fields comprising the site are only of limited ecological value. The boundary hedgerows do have some value and many of these are to be retained in the housing layout and reinforced with additional planting. There will be substantial new boundary planting within the AONB, as well as new tree planting within the proposed open spaces in the development. The proposed development would therefore have an overall *negligible beneficial* magnitude of effect on this Landscape Habitats Aspect Area.

LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas beyond the site

- 5.9 The only Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas beyond the site where there is the potential for more than negligible effects are **MNMTHVS091 Wye Valley Sides** to the north of the site and **MNMTHVS065 Chepstow** immediately to the east.
- 5.10 In the Justification for an overall evaluation of ‘outstanding’ for *MNMTHVS091 Wye Valley Sides* the LANDMAP entry states that this is a:

“The valley sides are a highly attractive and dramatic element in the valley complementing the valley floor and the river course allowing a range of attractive views down the valley. The area has maintained its integrity through consistent woodland cover and is relatively unspoilt by development. The valley sides have a very strong sense of place due to their distinctive landform and wooded character. They and the gorge are a very rare landscape in Monmouthshire and nationally”.

Views from this Aspect Area to the site area are limited and, given the separation distance, intervening elements such as the Racecourse buildings and the built edges of Chepstow, plus development being kept off the higher ground, will mean that the magnitude of effect on MNMTHVS091 Wye Valley Sides would be *negligible adverse*.

- 5.11 In the Justification for an overall evaluation of ‘moderate’ for MNMTHVS065 Chepstow, the LANDMAP entry states that:

“The town has distinct scenic quality in its original core with a strong relationship between castle and the river Wye but the more recent part of the town has a poor relationship with the landscape. The town centre is in good condition but there is intrusive development in parts. A strong identity is retained in its conservation core. The relationship of the town with the Wye is rare”.

The edges of Chepstow adjoining the site are part of the large-scale modern estate development around the town. They are only of moderate landscape value and the development does provide an opportunity to consolidate the nucleated form of the settlement and provide strong defensible and attractive edges with the AONB landscape to the north and west. For these reasons, the magnitude of effect on the MNMTHVS065 Chepstow Aspect Area is assessed as *negligible adverse*.

Massing and Scale in the Surrounding Landscape

- 5.12 Chepstow is one of the main settlements in Monmouthshire and has long since expanded with new housing estates and other development well beyond its historic core. In the context of this large settlement, and with a medium to large scale rural landscape to the west, the mass and scale of proposed development can be comfortably assimilated into its surroundings. Much of the site is on lower ground and visually contained by substantial mature woodland and hedgerows. With the proposed new structure planting, the new built development can form an attractive urban edge to the north-west of Chepstow. For these reasons, the residual magnitude of effect of the changes of massing and scale on the surrounding landscape arising from the development as envisaged are assessed as *minor adverse*.

Physical Landscape Effects on Topography

- 5.13 The proposed development is designed to work sympathetically with the undulating contours to minimise the level changes needed for construction of the housing and associated infrastructure. Physical changes to site topography are therefore assessed as having a residual *minor adverse* magnitude of effect on topography.

Vegetation

- 5.14 A landscape framework for the development will be created which combines retained and enhanced landscape features, together with significant new native tree and shrub planting on the boundaries and within the public open spaces of the development.
- 5.15 There would be a moderate loss of vegetation where sightlines for the new access from the B44235 will need to be cleared, as well as the removal of some sections of existing hedgerows within the site to create access routes.
- 5.16 Within the development, street and front garden planting will create attractive well-functioning external spaces for the residents of the development and will contribute significant green elements which will assist in the reduction of the perceived mass and density of the proposed built form. A programme of landscape management would be drawn up to ensure the long-term sustainability of the existing and proposed landscape features.
- 5.17 The overall magnitude of effect on vegetation is therefore assessed as *minor beneficial* when established.

Public Rights of Way

- 5.18 There are two existing PRoW routes across the site. Firstly, a north-south route close to the western boundary, comprising 355/16/1 beside Bishop's Barnet's Wood with a section to the south 373/75/1. Secondly, and connecting with the former, is 355/4/4 which, in turn, connects with 355/4/3 along the northern boundary of the site before meeting the A466 at the south-eastern edge of the Grange development. These existing rights of way would be maintained, with some local diversions to accommodate development, and will be supplemented with the creation of further links to the wider footpath network. The magnitude of effect on the local public rights of way network will therefore be overall *minor beneficial*.

Assessment of Visual Effects of the Proposed Development

General

- 5.19 Visual effects are defined as changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of development. These changes can be positive (beneficial or an improvement) or negative (i.e. adverse or a detraction). The assessment of visual effects describes:
- The changes in the character of the available views resulting from the development;
 - The changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptors.
- 5.20 A computer-generated ZTV has been identified, modified and verified by subsequent fieldwork, and from this a series of representative assessment viewpoints have been established. These are shown in Appendix Figures AJA /04 to /16. These viewpoints have been assessed for the various development conditions and the results are discussed in the following commentary. This viewpoint analysis has then been used to inform a discussion of the likely visual effects on the principal groups of visual receptors.

Visual Effects on the Principal Groups of Visual Receptors

Residential Receptors

- 5.21 Residential receptors are amongst the most sensitive to visual effects. In accordance with GLVIA 3rd Edition, the assessment of visual effects is based on the likely view(s) from ground floor rooms that are normally occupied during daylight hours.

Chepstow

- 5.22 Modern housing estates abut much of the north-eastern, eastern and part of the southern boundaries. However, given the topography which means that much of this housing falls away from the site, only comparatively few houses have direct views onto the site, and then mostly from first floor windows, due to the screening effect of the significant boundary hedges and an existing landscape buffer along part of the eastern edge. Given that this boundary vegetation is to be retained and reinforced with additional planting, the anticipated magnitude of effect during construction will be generally *moderate (but locally major) adverse* during construction, becoming *moderate adverse* immediately afterwards and when mitigation planting has become fully established. The residual level of effect would therefore be *moderate-minor adverse* for these high sensitivity receptors.

Individual Properties

- 5.23 The Grange lies to the south west of Bayfields and from here a small section of the site will be visible but set-back and seen in the context of the existing Bayfields housing. The magnitude of effect here is assessed as *moderate adverse* during construction, reducing to *minor adverse* on completion and to *negligible adverse* when mitigation planting becomes fully established.

- 5.24 It is not anticipated that any other individual properties will experience more than *negligible adverse* magnitudes of effect. (There is discussion of further individual properties at paragraph 5.30, below)

Visual Setting of Registered Parks and Gardens: Piercefield Park, Chepstow Park Wood, Mounton, Wyelands, St Pierre Park,

- 5.25 Extensive desktop and field survey has been carried out to establish potential visual effects on Registered Parks and Gardens receptors. There appears to be no intervisibility on the ground between the site and Mounton, Wyelands and St Pierre Park and therefore *no* visual effects.
- 5.26 Various viewpoints have been presented in the appendices showing representative views from those parts of Piercefield Park which could potentially experience visual effects from the proposed development. Given the limited intervisibility and separation distance, visual effects are limited and localised. In many of these views, the Racecourse buildings dominate the landscape in the direction of site and where the proposed housing is visible, it would only appear as a barely discernible narrow band above the existing Grange development. The magnitude of visual effects on the setting of Piercefield Registered Park would therefore be locally *minor adverse* during construction, reducing to *negligible adverse* on completion and when mitigation planting has become fully established.
- 5.27 It should also be noted that none of the Cadw ‘Significant Views’ shown on the Register plan for Piercefield Park are in the direction of the site.
- 5.28 The magnitude of visual effects on Chepstow Park Wood Registered Park and Garden would be *negligible adverse* at all stages of development. The great majority of proposed development areas will be invisible from here, due to the enclosing woodland and separation distance. A small area of the proposed development in the north of the site will be seen against a backdrop of the existing built edge of Chepstow.

Visual Setting of Listed buildings: Lion Gates and Lodges Chepstow Racecourse, Itton Court, SAMS: Bishop’s Barnet Wood Camp – earthworks

- 5.29 The setting of the Lion Gates and Lodges are already dominated by the adjacent roundabout and associated highway paraphernalia. Also, the prominent Grange development between the site and the gates is a significant detractor in the setting of this listed feature. The proposed development will, in this context, only represent a modest change, with the sloping land up from the proposed entrance on the B4235 having no housing and being part of the POS for the new housing area. The magnitude of effects on the visual setting of the gates is therefore assessed as *minor adverse* during construction, reducing to *negligible adverse* on completion and when mitigation planting has become fully established.
- 5.30 Itton Court is approximately 3kms north-west of the site. Although there are no publicly accessible viewpoints beside this property, **Viewpoint 7** is from a similar direction, being located upon higher ground beyond the house and at around 3.9kms distant. The proposed development areas would be barely visible or almost completely screened from here due to

the enclosing woodland and the separation distance. Therefore, the magnitude of effects on the visual setting of Itton Court would appear to be *negligible adverse* at all stages of the development.

- 5.31 The designated SAMS, Bishop's Barnet Wood Camp – earthworks, lie within mostly mature deciduous woodland to the north-west of the site. There are some partial views out from the fort. The proposed housing will be outside the woodland and generally at a lower level and will not substantially impinge on the setting of the SAMS. , Boundary planting as part of the development will add to the existing woodland cover will limit views. Therefore, the magnitude of effects on the visual setting of the wood camp would be *moderate adverse* during construction and on completion, reducing to *minor adverse* when mitigation planting has become established.

Visual Setting of AONB

- 5.32 Any visual effects are indirect, as the site lies outside the AONB. The Bayfields site is close to only the southernmost extremity of what is a markedly narrow, long linear designated area centred on the river valley running between Monmouth and the north-western edge of Chepstow. The proposed development of housing on this edge of Chepstow does not change the essential characteristics of the landscape relationship between the settlement and AONB. Much of the proposed housing is to be situated on lower ground and would not be visible from the vast majority of the land within the AONB. That small area of the setting of the AONB which would be affected is confined to the immediately adjacent areas to the north-west and west of the site. In longer views from the AONB land to the north, visual effects are significantly reduced by the separation distance and by housing on higher ground being seen against the existing built urban edge of Chepstow in a way which is consistent with the form of the settlement. There will be *negligible adverse* visual effects on the parkland at Piercefield Park, and on long views across to the Severn Estuary.

Public Footpaths, Designated Access Land and Promoted Viewpoints

- 5.33 There will be *major adverse* visual effects on the existing PRoW's on the site during construction, but these will reduce to *moderate adverse* on completion and *minor adverse* when mitigation planting becomes established.
- 5.34 A public footpath runs to the south-west of the site in the vicinity of The Grange. A small section of the site will be visible but set back and seen in the context of the existing Bayfields housing. The magnitude of visual effect is assessed as *moderate adverse* during construction, reducing to *minor adverse* on completion and to *negligible adverse* when mitigation planting has become fully established.
- 5.35 A public footpath north of the site links the B4293 and B4235. Given the prominence of the existing Grange development and the large electricity substation -and the masterplan for the development restricting any new housing on the sloping land running up from the proposed entrance on the B4235 - the magnitude of visual effect is assessed as *moderate adverse* during

construction, reducing to *minor adverse* on completion and to *negligible adverse* when mitigation planting has become fully established.

- 5.36 No other public rights of way have been identified as experiencing more than *negligible adverse* residual visual effects.
- 5.37 **Viewpoint 9** illustrates the view from the Eagles Nest promoted viewpoint, around 3.1 kms from the nearest part of the site. From here, the site area appears as a small distant element in this wide panoramic view. The Racecourse buildings, at a similar range and in the same sector of view, are much more visible and draw the eye. A narrow band of housing would barely be visible above the existing Grange development but, at this separation distance and in the context of the built edge of Chepstow, any visual effects would be *negligible adverse* at all stages of development.

Roads

- 5.38 The main road potentially most affected by the development is the A466 in the approach to Chepstow from the north. **Viewpoint 4** illustrates this close-range view, around 0.33kms from the nearest edge of the site. The recent Grange development is prominent, and its edge makes an abrupt transition from urban development into the adjacent countryside. The lower fields to the east of the Grange, although within the site, would remain free from housing, accommodating only an access road, and would form part of the designed open space network. Bayfields would be seen as a minor extension of the built edge of Chepstow and not as an isolated new development. The magnitude of residual visual effect is therefore assessed as *moderate adverse* during construction and on completion, reducing to *minor adverse* when mitigation planting has become fully established.
- 5.39 Similar visual effects will be experienced by road users on the short section of the B4235 and B4293 north of the site boundary.
- 5.40 No road sections have been identified as experiencing more than *negligible adverse* residual visual effects.

Discussion of the Visual Issues concerning Development on the Higher Elevations of the site

- 5.41 The process of landscape and visual appraisal has formed an integral part of the Bayfields site design process. The local topography and land cover contribute significantly to assimilating the proposed housing development into the local landscape, even when viewed at close range. The adjacent areas of the extreme southern end of the AONB to the west and north-west of the site form a natural backdrop to the northern edge of Chepstow. Existing housing already forms a noticeable part of the landscape of the locality, and its edges are in places harsh, with an abrupt transition into the open fields nearby.
- 5.42 The overwhelming majority of the land designated as the Wye Valley AONB lies to the north of the site, centred on the course of the River Wye itself. As a consequence of the elevated ground to the east and west of the deeply incised valley, long views to the south towards the

Bristol Channel are occasionally obtainable, although the area is substantially wooded. The amount and disposition of woodland can be easily seen by examining the ZTV plan in the Appendices at Figure AJA /03. The visual assessment from the representative viewpoint locations at Viewpoints 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 effectively illustrates the very limited visibility of much of the Bayfields site and the landscape and visual implications of the exposed higher ground remaining undeveloped.

6. CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

- 6.1 Whilst the 2013 edition of the GLVIA provides more guidance on cumulative landscape and visual effects, the definition contained in the 2002 is still relevant. Those guidelines defined cumulative landscape and visual effects as those that:

“Result from additional changes to the landscape or visual amenity caused by the proposed development in conjunction with other development (associated with or separate to it), or actions that occurred in the past, present or are likely to occur in the foreseeable future”.

- 6.2 Best practice Cumulative Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment guidance contained in the 3rd Edition GLVIA, page 133, states that the baseline for assessing cumulative and visual effects should include those schemes and additional potential schemes that are not yet present in the landscape but are at various stages in the development and consenting process, including schemes with planning consent and schemes that are the subject of a valid planning application that has yet to be determined. Schemes that are at a pre-planning or scoping stage are not generally considered in the assessment of cumulative effects.
- 6.3 Using these guidelines, the only scheme which we have identified as of a scale and type which is relevant to the consideration of cumulative visual effects with the proposed development is the site at Mabey Bridge on the south-eastern side of Chepstow by the River Wye with outline permission for mixed-use development.

Landscape Cumulative Effects

- 6.4 Chepstow has grown very considerably in the mid to later part of the 20th century out from its historic core with large areas of modern estate housing the dominant feature of outer parts of the settlement. The Mabey Bridge development, the northern part of which is close to the historic core, is on the south-eastern side of the town and proposed to regenerate a derelict former shipyard and bridge engineering fabrication yard which is situated only a few metres above sea level. The Mabey Bridge site is located within a totally different area of landscape, situated as it is within the confines of the lower Wye Valley, completely unrelated to the landscape to the north-west of Chepstow.
- 6.5 In this context, the proposed Bayfields development fits as a natural extension of the settlement, with existing housing areas on the majority of three sides. Development of the site fits with the scale and grain of the landscape of north-west Chepstow. There is no visual connection between the site and Mabey Bridge and the combination of both areas of

development will not significantly alter the overall settlement scale and pattern. We have therefore not identified any significant cumulative landscape effects.

Visual Cumulative Effects

- 6.6 The proposed site adjoins substantial existing areas of housing on the edge of Chepstow and is significantly enclosed by woodland to the north-west. It will be difficult to perceive much visual change from the development to the settlement boundary of Chepstow from the majority of the surrounding area, given the few close-range views obtainable, the relatively tight enclosure of woodland and evident backdrop of adjacent urban areas. Therefore, we have identified no significant visual cumulative visual effects from the development.

7. LANDSCAPE-RELATED PLANNING POLICY

- 7.1 This section highlights those aspects of planning policy which are relevant to the landscape appraisal of the proposed development. There are also short commentaries on how the development relates to the identified policies.

National Landscape Planning Related Policy

Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 9 November 2016).

- 7.2 The relevant national planning policy framework is provided principally by Planning Policy Wales (PPW Edition 9 Nov 2016),

The PPW, promoting sustainability through good design, states:

4.11.8 Good design is essential to ensure that areas, particularly those where higher density development takes place, offer high environmental quality, including open and green spaces. Landscape considerations are an integral part of the design process and can make a positive contribution to environmental protection and improvement, for example to biodiversity, climate protection, air quality and the protection of water resources.

4.11.9 The visual appearance of proposed development, its scale and its relationship to its surroundings and context are material planning considerations. Local planning authorities should reject poor building and contextual designs. However, they should not attempt to impose an architectural taste or style arbitrarily and should avoid inhibiting opportunities for innovative design solutions.

Commentary on how development relates to policy

This local planning authority's officers have indicated, in the course of Pre-App discussions, that they support the principle of appropriately-designed residential development on the site. With existing built development on much of three sides of the site, the housing would fit comfortably within the urban pattern of this edge of Chepstow. Large woodlands further west enclose much of the site from wider views within the AONB, and visibility is further restricted by the masterplan layout which keeps much of the development to the lower ground and restricts it from the highest slopes. The proposed buildings would be of good quality design,

set within a strong framework of existing and proposed planting, which together would further help assimilate the development into the wider landscape and add to local landscape character. New planting within the development would add to the 'sense of place', comfort and enjoyment of residents.

TAN12: Design

- 7.3 Tan 12 Design March 2016 provides further guidance. Paragraph 5.5.2 advises that:
"In general terms, good design will almost always be dependent on working within the natural constraints and the historic character of the landscape and this should be the starting point from which the design of development evolves. The aim should be to achieve good design solutions which maximise the natural landscape assets and minimise environmental impact on the landscape. It is particularly important that proposals to amend or create new landscape are not considered as an afterthought and that the long-term impact of development on the landscape is fully understood. The quality of implementation and the long-term management of changes implicit in planting schemes are fundamental to a scheme's success".

Commentary on how development relates to policy

The development as envisaged has been designed to respect and work with the local characteristics of the landscape. The context of the site, on the edges of Chepstow and with a boundary with the Wye Valley AONB, has been considered carefully and a landscape strategy prepared which will integrate the new development into its surroundings. A wide landscape buffer will be created along the western boundary with the AONB and create a strong defensible edge. The siting of built development on the highest part of the site has been consciously avoided.

**MONMOUTHSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL ADOPTED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2011-2021
Adopted 27 February 2014**

- 7.4 This LDP is the current development plan for Monmouthshire County Council. Policies relevant to landscape and visual issues include the following.

Policy S13 – Landscape, Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment.

Development proposals must:

1. Maintain the character and quality of the landscape by:

(i) identifying, protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing the distinctive landscape and historical, cultural, ecological and geological heritage, including natural and man-made elements associated with existing landscape character;

(ii) protecting areas subject to international and national landscape designations;

(iii) preserving local distinctiveness, sense of place and setting;

(iv) respecting and conserving specific landscape features, such as hedges, trees and ponds;

(v) protecting existing key landscape views and vistas.

2. Maintain, protect and enhance the integrity and connectivity of Monmouthshire's green infrastructure network.

3. Protect, positively manage and enhance biodiversity and geological interests, including designated and non-designated sites, and habitats and species of importance and the ecological connectivity between them.

4. Seek to integrate landscape elements, green infrastructure, biodiversity features and ecological connectivity features, to create multifunctional, interconnected spaces that offer opportunities for recreation and healthy activities such as walking and cycling.

Commentary on how development relates to policy

The site location and masterplan development approach take careful account of the landscape sensitivities of the context. The development will be comfortably assimilated into the AONB rural landscape to the west and the built edges of the Chepstow on the other boundaries. The proposed landscape and Green Infrastructure will preserve and enhance local distinctiveness and the sense of place and create a sustainable environment for the development.

Policy S17 – Place Making and Design

Development shall contribute to creating high quality, attractive and sustainable places. All development proposals must include and promote high quality, sustainable inclusive design which respects local distinctiveness, respects the character of the site and its surrounding in order to protect and enhance the natural, historic and built environments and to create attractive, safe and accessible places.

Commentary on how development relates to policy

The masterplan design has taken careful account of the local landscape and built environment characteristics and an attractive residential development is proposed which respects the site and its wider context.

DES1 – General Design Considerations

All development should be of a high-quality sustainable design and respect the local character and distinctiveness of Monmouthshire's built, historic and natural environment. Development proposals will be required to:

- a) ensure a safe, secure, pleasant and convenient environment that is accessible to all members of the community, supports the principles of community safety and encourages walking and cycling;*
- b) contribute towards sense of place whilst ensuring that the amount of development and its intensity is compatible with existing uses;*
- c) respect the existing form, scale, siting, massing, materials and layout of its setting and any neighbouring quality buildings;*
- d) maintain reasonable levels of privacy and amenity of occupiers of neighbouring properties, where applicable;*
- e) respect built and natural views and panoramas where they include historical features and / or attractive or distinctive built environment or landscape;*
- f) use building techniques, decoration, styles and lighting to enhance the appearance of the proposal having regard to texture, colour, pattern, durability and craftsmanship in the use of materials;*

- g) incorporate and, where possible enhance existing features that are of historical, visual or nature conservation value and use the vernacular tradition where appropriate;*
- h) include landscape proposals for new buildings and land uses in order that they integrate into their surroundings, taking into account the appearance of the existing landscape and its intrinsic character, as defined through the LANDMAP process. Landscaping should take into account, and where appropriate retain, existing trees and hedgerows;*
- i) make the most efficient use of land compatible with the above criteria, including that the minimum net density of residential development should be 30 dwellings per hectare, subject to criterion l) below ;*
- j) achieve a climate responsive and resource efficient design. Consideration should be given to location, orientation, density, layout, built form and landscaping and to energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, including materials and technology;*
- k) foster inclusive design;*
- l) ensure that existing residential areas characterised by high standards of privacy and spaciousness are protected from overdevelopment and insensitive or inappropriate infilling.*

Commentary on how development relates to policy

The design development as envisaged has taken account of the landscape characteristics of the site. The proposed residential development as envisaged would be in scale with this part of the outer Chepstow urban area. The site design encourages a 'sense of place' and the use of local materials and design styles will enhance local distinctiveness and protect the natural and built environment, including the setting of the local area of the AONB. The design and mitigation measures being proposed will ensure that there is satisfactory assimilation of the development into the local landscape.

Policy LC4 – Wye Valley AONB

Within the Wye Valley AONB, any development must be subservient to the primary purpose to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. In considering development proposals regard will be given to:

- a) the long term effect of the proposal, and the degree to which its nature and intensity is compatible with the character, purpose and overall management of the AONB;*
- b) the degree to which design, quality and use of appropriate materials harmonise with the surrounding landscape and built heritage;*
- c) the extent of the landscaping proposed;*
- d) the need to protect features in the landscape identified as important through LANDMAP;*
- e) the extent to which a proposed new building or use will generate additional traffic and the requirement for improvement of existing roads and lanes, including the surfacing of green lanes; and*
- f) the impact of the proposed development upon nature conservation interests.*

Development proposals that are outside the AONB but would detract unacceptably from its setting will not be permitted.

Commentary on how development relates to policy

Although part of the site boundary is adjacent to the Wye Valley AONB, landscape and visual effects will be limited by the strong enclosing woodland and by the fact that the development would be seen against the backdrop of the adjacent areas of housing which border the site on three sides. Housing will be kept off the highest land and also off the rising land immediately south of the B4235. The design of buildings will be of high quality and use appropriate materials. The proposed integrated landscape and green infrastructure led approach will enable the development to be well assimilated in the wider landscape.

Policy LC5 – Protection and Enhancement of Landscape Character

Development proposals that would impact upon landscape character, as defined by LANDMAP Landscape Character Assessment, must demonstrate through a landscape assessment how landscape character has influenced their design, scale, nature and site selection.

Development will be permitted provided it would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the special character or quality of Monmouthshire's landscape in terms of its visual, historic, geological, ecological or cultural aspects by:

- a) Causing significant visual intrusion;*
- b) Causing significant adverse change in the character of the built or natural landscape;*
- c) Being insensitively and unsympathetically sited within the landscape;*
- d) Introducing or intensifying a use which is incompatible with its location;*
- e) Failing to harmonise with, or enhance the landform and landscape; and /or*
- f) Losing or failing to incorporate important traditional features, patterns, structures and layout of settlements and landscapes of both the built and natural environment.*

Particular emphasis will be given to those landscapes identified through the LANDMAP Landscape Character Assessment as being of high and outstanding quality because of a certain landscape quality or combination of qualities.

Commentary on how development relates to policy

Existing landscape character has been carefully analysed, both by desktop analysis - including the LANDMAP database - and Monmouthshire's Landscape Housing Sensitivity and Capacity Study and by field assessment. The location, proposed masterplan layout and structural landscape treatment will comfortably assimilate the development into its surroundings without any unacceptable adverse landscape or visual effects.

Policy GI1 – Green Infrastructure

Development proposals will be expected to maintain, protect and enhance Monmouthshire's diverse green infrastructure network by:

- a) Ensuring that individual green assets are retained wherever possible and integrated into new development. Where loss of green infrastructure is unavoidable in order to secure sustainable development appropriate mitigation and/or compensation of the lost assets will be required;*
- b) Incorporating new and /or enhanced green infrastructure of an appropriate type, standard and size. Where on-site provision of green infrastructure is not possible,*

contributions will be sought to make appropriate provision for green infrastructure off-site.

Commentary on how development relates to policy

The development of the proposed Masterplan for the development has been informed by Green Infrastructure principles. Green Infrastructure proposals have been prepared at an appropriate level of detail for an Outline planning application.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 A Landscape and Visual Appraisal has been carried out of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed residential development at Bayfields, Chepstow, based upon the development proposals as envisaged.
- 8.2 Landscape and visual effects have been assessed; taking into account the construction stage, immediately after construction and when mitigation planting becomes established. The evaluation does take account of the mitigation measures which are proposed.
- 8.3 The process of landscape and visual appraisal has formed an integral part of the Bayfields site selection and design process.
- 8.4 Desktop and field study of existing landscape character has been carried out and an assessment made of the site's landscape sensitivity to the proposed housing development, taking into account the scope for mitigation. This concludes that an evaluation of 'medium' sensitivity would be appropriate. This is lower than the 'high medium' sensitivity assessed in Monmouthshire's Landscape Sensitivity and Capacity Study (2010) for the general 'LLCA C03 Chepstow' within which the Bayfields site is located. We believe the 2010 evaluation is too high for the site, since Bayfields is not within the AONB and is immediately adjacent to the modern, substantially residential urban edge of Chepstow. The large woodland blocks to the west visually enclose much of the site and reinforce the links between the site areas and urban Chepstow. Moreover, it should be noted that this study was published in 2010 and there have been further housing developments in the vicinity of Bayfields.
- 8.5 A strong landscape framework for the development will be created which combines retained and enhanced landscape features, together with significant new native tree and shrub planting on the boundaries and within the public open spaces of the development. A substantial landscape buffer will be created along the boundary with the AONB. The landscape approach to the proposed development would also contribute to softening those areas of existing hard urban edge where there is an abrupt transition into open land, such as at The Grange site.
- 8.6 The site is close to only the southernmost extremity of the markedly narrow, long linear Wye Valley AONB, centred on the river valley running between Monmouth and the north-western edge of Chepstow. The proposed development does not change the essential characteristics of the landscape relationship between the settlement and the AONB. Much of the proposed housing is to be situated on lower ground and would not be visible from the vast majority of the land within the AONB. Built development has been consciously avoided on the highest

- parts of the site That small area of the setting of the AONB which would be affected is confined to the immediately adjacent areas to the north-west and west of the site.
- 8.7 In longer views from the AONB land to the north, visual effects are significantly reduced by the separation distance and by housing on higher ground being seen against the existing built urban edge of Chepstow, in a way which is consistent with the form of the settlement.
- 8.8 Visual effects on the setting of Piercefield Park will be barely discernible, given limited intervisibility, separation distance and the dominance of the Racecourse buildings. None of the Cadw 'Significant Views' shown on the Register entry plan for Piercefield Park are in the direction of the site.
- 8.9 The site development would appear as a small distant element in the wide panoramic views from the Eagles Nest promoted viewpoint with negligible visual effects.
- 8.10 The setting of the Lion Gates and Lodges is already dominated by the adjacent roundabout and the prominent Grange development nearby. The proposed development will, in this context, only represent a modest change, with the sloping land up from the proposed entrance on the B4235 having no housing and being part of the POS for the new housing area.
- 8.11 There are some partial views out from the SAMS fort in Bishop's Barnet Wood. However, the proposed housing will be outside the woodland and generally at a lower level and will not substantially impinge on the visual setting of the SAMS.
- 8.12 Existing rights of way would be maintained across the site, with some local diversions to accommodate development, and will be supplemented with the creation of further links to the wider footpath network. There will only be minor visual effects on the views experienced by users of the wider footpath network and restricted to those within the close vicinity of the site.
- 8.13 There are some limited views of the northern edge of the development from the A466 in the approach from the north into Chepstow. However, the recent Grange development and some commercial development are much more prominent features on the settlement edge, which makes an abrupt transition with the adjacent countryside. The proposed residential development would appear as a minor extension of the built edge and not as isolated new development. The lower fields to the east of the Grange would not have housing, accommodating only an access road, and providing attractive public open space.
- 8.14 We have therefore not identified any significant cumulative landscape or visual effects with other relevant development in the Chepstow area.
- 8.15 The overall conclusion is that this development proposal complies with the raft of applicable national, regional and local planning policies related to the landscape. The proposed development at Bayfields, Chepstow, would respond sensitively to the unique characteristics of the site, providing attractive housing set within a strong framework of new planting which has no unacceptable effect on the setting of the wider AONB landscape.