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**Proposed strategic development site,
Llanfairfechan, Conwy County.**

Landscape and Visual overview

September 2019

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This report has been prepared by Tirlunbarr Associates on behalf of Beech Development (NW)Ltd. in connection with a potential development at Llanfairfechan Conwy County and takes into account their particular instructions and requirements. It is not intended for and should not be relied on by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

1.0 Introduction and scope of the report

- 1.1 Tirlun Barr Associates were appointed in summer 2019, by Beech Developments Ltd. to undertake an initial Landscape and Visual review of a proposed mixed use development on the outskirts of Llanfairfechan Conwy County north Wales.
- 1.2 The assessment was undertaken by Mrs. Julie Barr BA, Dip LA CMLI, a Chartered Landscape Architect with over 28 years' experience and Principal of Tirlun Barr Associates
- 1.3 This document has been prepared to accompany a submission by Beech Homes (NW) Ltd for mixed use development on land in Llanfairfechan as a candidate strategic site for consideration to be included in Conwy Councils forthcoming Local Development Plan 2013-2033(LDP Local Development Plan, 2018-2033(LDP).) Candidate sites were sought in 2018 to address the demand for a range of land uses such as housing residential, schools employment, retail and leisure etc.
- 1.4 This information provided is intended to provide an overview of any likely landscape and visual impacts that the development may have upon the surrounding landscape, and visual receptors at this initial stage and should not be considered as a Landscape and Visual Impact assessment, or heritage impact/historical assessment, which may be required in the future.
- 1.5 A basic description of the site and surrounding area context has been undertaken as a baseline identification, and the review has involved the consideration of the revised illustrative layout proposed following site inspection.
- 1.6 Suggested mitigation, including refinement of the illustrative masterplan, has been undertaken in order to reduce and avoid adverse impacts upon the wider landscape.
- 1.7 Report figures are contained within the Appendices at the rear of this document.

2.0 The proposed development

Landscape context

- 2.1 The proposed site extent comprises farmland west of Llanfairfechan forming part of the lowland slopes below the Carneddau which extend westwards to the existing Llanfairfechan cemetery and front the former A55 Aber Road (the original road pre-dating the A55 expressway) which extends from Llanfairfechan centre towards Bangor circa 7km distant.
- 2.2 The northern boundary of the Snowdonia National Park lies immediately to the south of the proposed site, along Gwyllt Road before rising southwards and forming an impressive mountainous fringe to the north Wales Coastline approximately 1km distant.
- 2.3 The site comprises generally pastoral land ranging from circa 25m AOD in the north rising in a southerly direction to circa 80m AOD, and an extract from Google Earth below indicates the site context within an aerial photograph.



Plate 1-The site context with the proposed site location highlighted above.

Google Maps ©

- 2.4 Built development is centred to the east of the site extent visually separated by a belt of existing trees along Caelffynnon Road which form the current edge of Llanfairfechan village, and include Llys y Coed retirement Home and St Marys and Christ Church.
- 2.5 To the north is Bryn y Neuadd (and closed hospital) which is listed within the ICOMOS UK, NRW and CADW Register of Landscapes Parks and Gardens of special Historic Interest in Wales - Site reference PGW(Gd) 3 (CON) as a Grade II

Type of garden:

“Mid nineteenth century landscape park with formal Italianate garden and extensive kitchen garden”

- 2.6 The park also contains Listed Buildings associated with the now demolished original Bryn y Neuadd Mansion and the site has formerly been a mental health Unit and hospital with parts of the original grounds taken to construct the A55 (T) road in the late 1980's.
- 2.7 The proposed site is located entirely within the LANDMAP Aspect Area reference CNWYVS074 Llanfairfechan – as urban land - (the Aspect area following the land beyond the village to the north and west) as described as:

“A narrow coastal area, tightly hemmed in by steeply rising mountains to the south (Snowdonia) and the sea to the north (Conwy Bay) providing inherently attractive views out, and the basis for a strong sense of place. Spectacular rocky headlands plunge into the sea at Penmaenbach and Penyclip, dissecting the area but for the A55/railway corridor that forms a dramatic and changing travel experience through the area. Between the headlands there are large suburban village settlements; Llanfairfechan, Penmaenmawr and Dwygyfylchi, historic stone and brick built cores and wooded suburbs contrast with modern housing estates that are indifferent to natural or historic character. Long established granite quarries on mountains above Penmaenmawr have resulted in industrial elements (workers cottages old workings, railhead) some of which are now experienced as heritage. Promenades abut adjacent sandy beaches but access points and tranquillity are notable eroded by the A55 road.”

- 2.8 The Snowdonia National Park located to the south of Gwyllt Road also forms the northern edge of the ICOMOS UK, NRW and CADW designated North Arllechwedd Landscape of Historic Interest in Wales and comprises the narrow coastal strip uplands and dissected northern flanks of the Carneddau ridge in north Snowdonia. Ref no. (Gw) 12 described as follows:

“A dissected mainly upland area situated on the northern flanks of the Carneddau ridge in north Snowdonia, containing well preserved relic evidence of recurrent land use and settlement from the prehistoric to medieval and later periods. The area includes a Neolithic axe factory, dense and remarkable concentrations of Bronze Age funerary and ritual monuments; iron age hillforts. Settlements, fields systems, prehistoric trackways, a Roman road, medieval settlements, fields systems, a motte and commuted centre at Abergwyngregyn, recent mining and quarrying remains.”

- 2.9 Within the extant Conwy LDP the proposed site area has no protective landscape designation; the nearest designation being the Bryn y Neuadd Historic Park and Garden which extends to Aber Road immediately to the north but excludes the site itself.
- 2.10 The surrounding area contains scattered dwellings particularly on higher land surrounding the site located along Llanerch Road and Gwyllt Road, or along Aber Road (historically the former A55 coastal road), however the main centre of built development is located in the east within the village and extending along Station Road and Valley Road.

- 2.11 The site is visually well screened from Aber Road by existing vegetation and relative height difference, whereby views of the site are limited from road users to localised areas and not extensive or dominant.
- 2.12 There are no footpaths within the site and few within the immediate area however existing minor lanes and pavements link the area with the main village and existing facilities.
- 2.13 Existing abundant existing native trees and large coverts exist throughout the site, possibly a remnant of earlier parkland and game coverts, many with traditional slate fencing boundaries, as a local landscape feature.
- 2.14 Further screening and site division is provided by existing native hedges along adjoining lanes and Aber Road which is places are on banks above the which further curtail long views.

Predominant views/linkage/intervisibility

- 2.15 Views in to the site from the surrounding area are largely gained from a distance and whereby topography and the presence of many layers of vegetation between receptors and the proposed site permit- and are generally from the north looking south towards Snowdonia and higher land or from immediately adjoining areas such as the cemetery or minor gaps within Gwyllt Road.
- 2.16 The national long distance Wales Path runs through the centre of Llanfairfechan before heading along the coast but visually separated from the site by the parkland of Bryn y Neuadd and the A55(T) and railway corridor and associated screening.
- 2.17 Recreational receptors are the most sensitive, as are occupiers of dwellings, although few are likely to be affected; users of the transport corridor (predominantly Aber Road) are likely to be the group that perceive the greatest change in their view and in larger number, however their sensitivity as a receptor group is less travelling through an area.
- 2.18 Views from the existing village are largely screened and limited by adjacent built development and existing vegetation, but very distant views are anticipated where long views towards the site exist for example from the south eastern tip of Anglesey; but which include views of the existing village and which will be visible only in part on higher elevations of the site and filtered through existing vegetation even in winter months.
- 2.19 There are very limited views towards the site from the A55(T) Bryn y Neuadd or railway corridor due to the presence of existing vegetation and relative topography.

Landscape character and quality

- 2.20 Overall the landscape quality is good, comprising intact native hedgerows, native stature field trees, established coverts of woodland and traditional slate fencing, amongst well managed pasture, and offering long views north wards towards Anglesey, Lavan Sands, Puffin Island and beyond.
- 2.21 Tranquillity levels are reduced by the presence of the busy A55(T) corridor which is in evidence despite being screened and this together with movement and activity within the village and visitors to the cemetery for example create a more urban character than can be assumed.
- 2.22 Aber Road provides an urban edge to the north of the site, with street lighting, signage, scale and movement somewhat reducing the immediate rural quality and character, whilst land rising to higher elevations is more rural and set above the majority of development which follows the lower topography along Aber Road.

- 2.23 From within the site - development is visible to the north, and east, with less dense and scattered activity and built development to the south and west, although development extends along Llanerch Road in the south east towards the site.

Materials

- 2.24 As noted by the NRW LANDMAP Character Aspect Area, materials in the study area vary widely; older vernacular features generally comprise dressed Dolerite local stone, large houses with large gardens; many of which are 3 storey fronting Penmaenmawr Road through the village, or field stone cottages terraces and rural farm buildings in roads linking out of the village towards upland areas from the village core.
- 2.25 More recent post war housing types are varied, as repeated detached, and semi-detached properties of predominantly brick and render of mixed colour and limited vernacular reference or architectural merit and more recently cedar cladding and coloured fenestration at Caerffynnon.



- 2.26 An exception to this is a discreet Arts and Crafts suburb known as The Close – designed by the Architect Herbert Luck North in Llanfairfechan which are located south of Penmaenmawr Road within the village centre. The estate featured in publications in the 1920s as a distinctive design, and each of the 29 houses and additional community buildings he designed are Listed Buildings set within a Conservation Area designated in 1989.
- 2.27 Within the village Victorian centre, soft landscape materials are largely Victorian comprising specimen ornamental vegetation, including well established stature trees, large shrubberies and ornamental clipped hedging within mature large gardens, whilst more modern or terrace traditional cottages have small gardens, limited planting and large areas of parking and hard landscape of a distinctly smaller scale.
- 2.28 Street furniture is generally utilitarian and reflects the former A55 route through the village centre, however once in the village core along Station Road and Valley Road the streetscape and overall visual quality reflects the Victorian and Georgian eras with attention to detail and expensive and ornate decoration.

Proposal

- 2.29 The revised illustrative layout extends development westwards north of Aber Road linking the village centre to the cemetery and extending southwards and the Illustrative Layout is indicated within Figure 2 at the rear of this document.
- 2.30 The layout proposed reflects the presence of land which contains a High Pressure Gas Main and substantial associated easement, which prevents built development upon it and which is reflected within the overall development as Public Open Space provision; this reduces the overall originally proposed site area available for development.
- 2.31 Natural Resources Wales (formerly CCW) have undertaken a landscape qualitative assessment for the whole of Wales entitled LANDMAP which includes the proposed site extent, in order to

contribute to current and future landscape related policy and which is considered to have formed the baseline for the Councils Landscape related policy direction.

2.32 **LANDMAP** is the name given to a computer based landscape assessment and decision making process originally devised by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the Wales Landscape Partnership Group (which comprised the main local government bodies in Wales from local and central level)

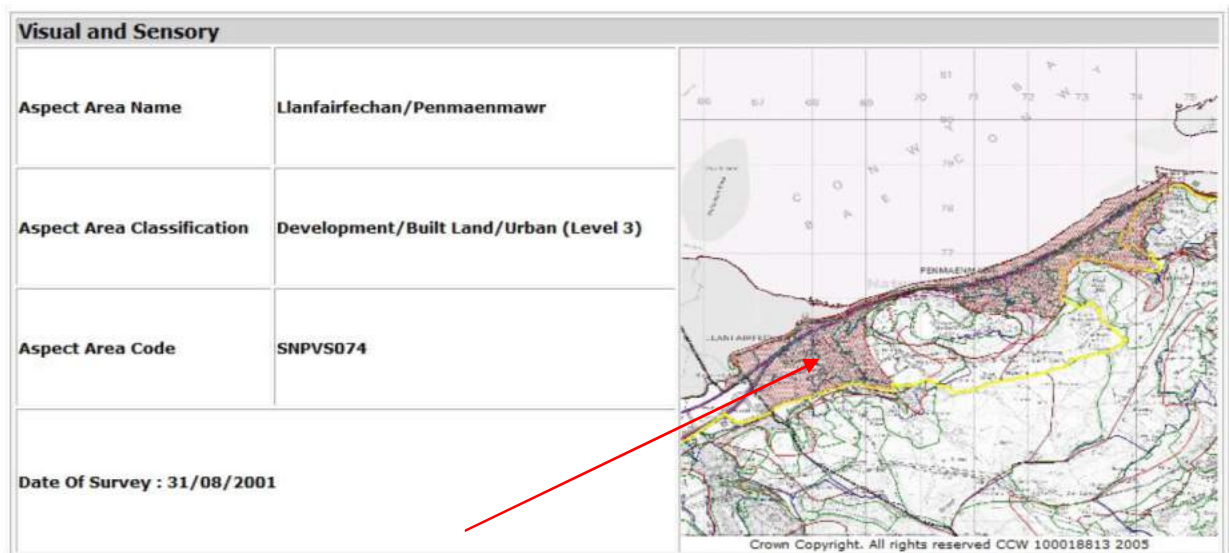
2.33 **LANDMAP** stands for Landscape Assessment and Decision Making Process, and is designed to assist decision making over a range of disciplines, e.g. development planning and development control, environmental enhancement, biodiversity, forestry and rural development etc.; there are five Evaluated Aspect layers which comprise the full set of LANDMAP information, these are:

Visual and Sensory: This aspect layer identifies those landscape qualities that are perceived through the senses. It deals with the individual physical attributes of landform and land cover, as well as their visual patterns of distribution and sensory characteristics, and the relationships between them in a particular area.

Landscape Habitats: This aspect layer looks at the distribution of vegetation and habitats and the basis for landscape ecology.

Cultural Landscape: This aspect layer considers the relationship that exists between people and places; how people have given meaning to places, how the landscape has shaped their actions

2.34 Both the original site development extent and extended site extent are located within the LANDMAP Aspect Area reference CNWYVS074 Llanfairfechan – as urban land which extends westwards linking Llanfairfechan centre to the western interchange of the A55. Extract below;



LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Area extent ©NRW (CCW)

2.35 The indicative layout had sought to reflect a number of early landscape led principles to provide a feasible and reasoned response to the site and its landscape context, including:

- Devising a schematic layout that reduces adverse landscape and visual impact through using retained vegetation, the site topography, and natural topography to absorb the development characteristics and extent. This will include future attention to materials layout and access as well as boundary treatments and soft landscaping at the detailed design stage.
- Creating a core location for a future school and school grounds fronting Aber Road as a centrally located community provision
- Continuing housing development alongside Aber Road in the same character as exists in the village at present
- Retaining existing vegetation to promote the existing site fragmentation and screening to visually reduce development scale
- Using existing vegetation as the background to development to contain and provide a natural boundary and setting for the development
- Maintaining visual separation from Bryn y Neuadd
- Reflecting local landscape character and development scale through use of existing materials and design within final detailed proposals
- Promoting wider connectivity in the area through designated routes
- Providing biodiversity benefit and enhancement of the existing landscape

Llanfairfechan Aber Road looking west



Llanfairfechan- built form and colours looking east



3.0 Summary

- 3.1 The assessment has reviewed an illustrative proposed residential development on land on the outskirts of Llanfairfechan to establish any likely predicted impacts and mitigation measures that can be included to avoid or reduce these as part of the illustrative masterplan proposal, and includes land beyond the original strategic site extent (as a result of part of the original site extent being unavailable for built development due to the Gas Main easement) to provide comparative dwelling numbers to those originally envisaged.
- 3.2 The review is an initial consideration of any likely impacts and is not intended to replace the need for any future Landscape and Visual Assessment, but serves to assist in considering the site, its merits and limitations in respect of Landscape and Visual Amenity at this early stage.
- 3.3 Although the site is already known through previous commissions in the village, both desk top and site inspections were undertaken to review the proposed site extent and content in the field and to contribute towards any future layout and content.
- 3.4 The illustrative masterplan extends the development footprint beyond the current strategic site extent to achieve desired maximum dwelling provision after identification of a sterile strip of land which runs through the site due to the presence of a high pressure gas main which demands an easement preventing development either side of its route.
- 3.5 The illustrative layout shown has adopted initial landscape and visual mitigation recommendations and further mitigation such as building form, materials, massing, and soft landscape inclusion will be developed further at any detailed design stages.
- 3.6 The site is naturally enclosed by the presence of mature native vegetation and although sensitive receptors exist in the area, relatively few receptor groups are likely to be affected and likely visual effects are lessened as a result.
- 3.7 Natural topography as well as peripheral layers of vegetation and mature stands of trees bordering the site assist in reducing views of the site for sensitive receptors such as Bryn y Neuadd Historic Park and Garden, Wales Coastal Path and the extensive number of receptors using the A55(T).
- 3.8 Whilst the landscape quality is good and the quality of land is attractive the presence of the former A55 (Now Aber Road) forming the northern site boundary and the audible A55(T) exert an influence over the site area whereby its proximity to development is evident even if views are obscured which concurs with the LANDMAP Aspect Area classification.
- 3.9 Landscape effects are predicted to include the loss of open farmland and change of land-use via the introduction of urban features into a presently agricultural and pastoral setting, and the change in present levels of tranquillity with movement both during construction and following completion.
- 3.10 This will constitute a major magnitude of change upon the local landscape and long term impact of significance, although it is already identified as having urban land character by NRW within their LANDMAP assessment.
- 3.11 Extending the site southwards towards Gwyllt Lane onto higher elevations beyond the indicated extent - would require careful consideration in order to assist landscape integration with development at this elevated location needing to reflect a more rural low density, and appearance, and access would have to be carefully provided reflecting the natural grain of the

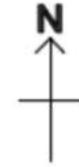
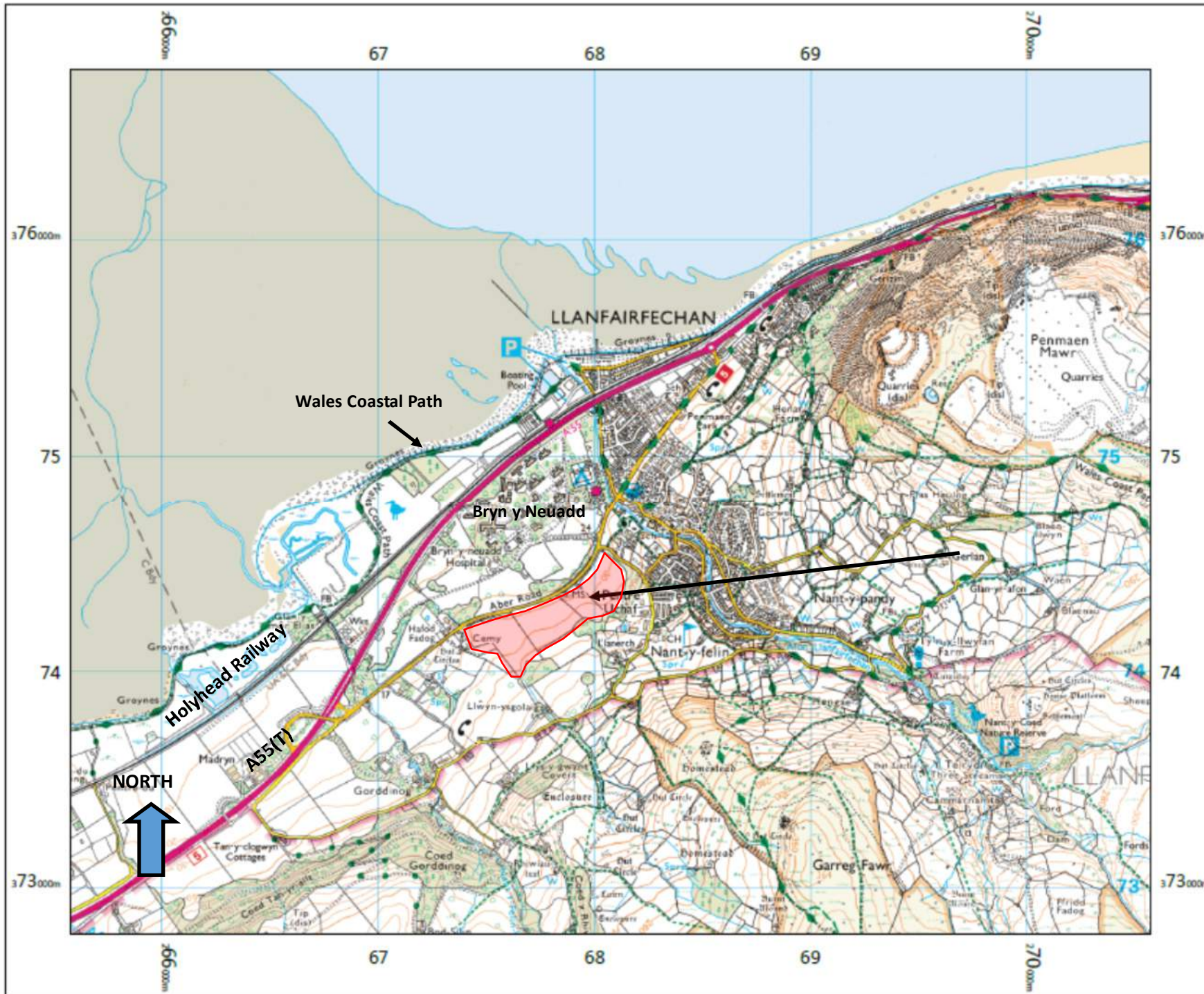
landscape as this part of the site is elevated and hence prominent to a wider area; albeit distant with receptors of over +5km.

- 3.12 Likewise built development at this elevation is more prominent and harder to screen given the natural orientation of the land and desire to retain longer views towards Anglesey, which will need to be carefully considered, however the extended site is within the LANDMAP Aspect Area reference CNWYVS074 Llanfairfechan which is classified as Urban hence despite the rural parkland appearance it affords.
- 3.13 It is not considered that the development will adversely affect the North Arllechwedd Landscape of Historic Interest in Wales, or further afield, or the Penmon Landscape of Historic Interest in Wales which is on Anglesey some +5km distant where long views of the development are limited by vegetation, distance, and topography to development on the higher elevations, and in which views include the current village of Llanfairfechan rising to comparative elevations.
- 3.14 In order to achieve an acceptable layout – it is recommended that a robust Masterplan approach is agreed following wider public consultation adopting landscape led principles to provide a sensitive and attractive development which takes into account the Gas main presence and its constraint upon any final layout.

List of Figures (Contained within the rear of this report)

- Figure 1** *Site Location Plan* 1:25000
- Figure 2** *Indicative Masterplan – prepared by Beech Developments (NW) Ltd.*
- Figure 3** *Photographs of the site context*

Llanfairfechan
FIGURE 1
SITE LOCATION PLAN
Sept 2019



OS 25k scale raster
Tuesday, September 17, 2019, ID:
CM-00828175
www.centremapslive.co.uk

1:25000 scale print at A4, Centre:
268074 E, 374786 N

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LLANFAIRFECHAN MASTERPLAN

(ILLUSTRATION PURPOSE ONLY)



Figure 2 Illustrative Layout

MAP KEY:	
	COMMUNITY LINK/ INTER-CONNECTIVITY
	CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA
	FUTURE SCHOOL (2 HECTARES)
	DESIGNATED ALLOTMENTS
	MULTI-USE GAMES AREA
	BUS STOP
	SITE ENTRANCE
	CYCLE ROUTE/ ACTIVE TRAVEL WALES
	WALKING ROUTE/ WOODLAND PARK WAY
	FUTURE HOUSING (23ACRES/280 UNITS)
	RECREATION AREA
	SKATE PARK
	ORNIMENTAL POND



Plate 1– Photograph taken from within the existing cemetery looking east over the proposed site with Bryn y Neuadd Historic park and garden located west of the plate.



Plate 2– Photograph taken from Aber Road looking south east towards the proposed site with Bryn y Neuadd to the left of the plate.

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FIGURE 3



Plate 3– Photograph taken from Aber Road looking towards the proposed site



Plate 4– Photograph taken from Aber Road looking towards the existing entrance to Bryn y Neuadd



Plate 5– Photograph taken from within The Close (Arts and Crafts conservation area) Llanfairfechan

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FIGURE 3



Plate 6 & 7– Photograph taken from within Llanfairfechan village illustrating varying house types and village character



Plate 8 & 9– Photograph taken from within Llanfairfechan village illustrating varying house types and village character

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FIGURE 3



Plates 10 & 11– Photograph taken from within the village illustrating traditional materials colours and period detailing



Plate 12– Photograph taken from above the proposed site (from Gwylt Lane) looking down towards the site and A55(T) and railway corridor beyond
With Anglesey in the distance

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FIGURE 3

All photographs taken with a Standard 67mm lens and assembled using Photoshop unless indicated otherwise.