

26 September 2016

Our ref: **L/EDP3504/MD/cg**

The Vale of Glamorgan Council
Development Control
Dock Office
Barry Docks
Barry
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Dear Sir / Madam

Strategic Landscape and Visual Appraisal Land East of Eglwys Brewis, Vale of Glamorgan

The purpose of this letter is to present an overview of the landscape and visual resources for the above site and in so doing, highlighting the opportunities and constraints to ensure key sensitivities are identified and considered with regards to future residential development.

The following statement is based on professional opinion; it has been informed by desktop analysis and field work, and is further supported by a review of local planning policy and character publications. Though it does not conform to the requirements of a 'full' Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (as set out within the Guidance for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment – 3rd Edition), it has been prepared by qualified landscape architects experienced in LVIA methodology and this has informed their considerations throughout.

Scope of Appraisal

The suitability of the site is judged on the constraints of the site itself and the planning context in which the site is set. However, for the purpose of this appraisal, a broad study area of 3km has been considered purely to provide an understanding of the surrounding topography and landscape features to inform the visual appraisal.

The aim of the appraisal is to consider the suitability of land east of Eglwys Brewis for residential development and impart professional judgement in respect of the potential landscape and visual effects arising, such that these can be considered in the planning balance, set against the benefits associated with the future residential development of this site.



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The characteristics of the existing site will be described and the commentary will suggest how the proposals should respond to its merits in terms of landscape and visual qualities.

The Site and Local Context

Plan EDP 1 attached, shows the landscape considerations and visual envelope of the site.

The site is located off Cowbridge Road to the north of the settlement of St Athan and MOD site RAF St Athan in the Vale of Glamorgan. The Site has been allocated within the Emerging Local Development Plan (LDP) for 300 residential dwellings (site reference MG2 (5) – Land to the East of Eglwys Brewis, St Athan).

The site comprises approximately 10.9 hectares (ha) of land which is divided into three irregular parcels; two large arable fields (western field / eastern field) and one small land parcel (southern field) with mature trees, semi-improved grass and some hardstanding.

The fields are separated by largely intact hedgerows and scrub. The site is bounded by vegetation on most sides; the site boundary abutting Cowbridge Road is weak and varies between poorly demarcated field boundary / roadside verge consisting of scrub and sections of hedgerow. The hedgerows on the northern, western and eastern site boundaries are intact and robust. They range between 2-6m in height and largely comprise a mix of native species.

The land use surrounding the site varies in all cardinal directions. Whilst standing on Cowbridge Road, gently undulating open countryside is seen to the north beyond the site; the existing MOD site is visible to the south; and residential development is located to the east and west in the form of small residential estates comprising two storey housing. The open countryside to the north of the site is similar in character to the site, comprising irregular large scale field pattern with low hedgerows demarcating field boundaries. Woodland is infrequent but present in small pockets and along water courses in valleys.

Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, Public Rights of Way and the Millennium Heritage Trail are designated assets within the study area. The closest Conservation Area (CA) is Flemingston which is approximately 380m north-east of the site at its closest point.

Opportunities and Constraints

Plan EDP 1 illustrates the opportunities and constraints identified within and adjacent to the site boundary. Landscape features include a stream along the western boundary, hedgerows along field boundaries and trees within the site itself. A flood risk zone has been identified adjacent to the stream.

Two archaeological points of interest are located within the western field and were under archaeological investigation at the time of the site visit.



A Public Right of Way (PRoW) E1/1/1 crosses the western field in a north-easterly direction. A Foul Pumping Station is located adjacent to the site boundary which has an associated right of way for access which crosses the site within the small field to the south-east.

Man-made features within the site boundary include an area of hard standing as mentioned above and foul pumping station, existing field access from Cowbridge Road and overhead power lines along the southern site boundary. An opportunity to enable pedestrian access between the site and neighbouring residential estate to the east has been identified.

Likely Views

Plan EDP 1 attached illustrates the likely views towards the site and the local ridgelines which curtail views towards the site. A 'visual envelope' is also drawn on **Plan EDP 1** to illustrate where some or all of the site may be visible. The extent to which the site is seen from within the visual envelope varies due to the topography of the site itself and vegetation intervening in some views, consequently some parts of the site are not visible from within the visual envelope.

From the north, open and filtered views towards the site are available from the elevated ground. The level plateau located between 500m and 1km to the north of the site has views of the surrounding countryside and the site is visible from this location. These views are partially filtered by intervening vegetation however due to the landform, views into the eastern field are more prominent.

Flemingston CA is a small settlement to the north east of the site, buildings in the CA form a cluster and views outwards are uncommon. From the edge of the CA, views towards the site are filtered by roadside vegetation, however, framed views may be glimpsed through field gates on the boundary of the CA.

From the south, views are limited to close range views from Cowbridge Road only as the RAF base is located to the south of the road and obscures views towards the site from further south.

From the east, there are open views into the site from Cowbridge Road adjacent to the site boundary; a residential estate with east-facing properties has close range views of the site from this location. The view mainly comprises the two larger fields as the roadside vegetation between the site and Cowbridge Road is gappy and non-existent in places. The wooded character of the smaller parcel of land restricts the view into this field from the east. Similar to the views anticipated from Cowbridge Road, these properties abutting Cowbridge Road will have close range views of the site. These properties would intervene in views from further east due to their proximity to the site boundary.

From the west, views are limited to residential properties adjacent to the site boundary. Vegetation between these properties and the site obscures views into the site, particularly into the small wooded field from the north, however, close range views are available from Celyn Close adjacent to the site boundary where the site boundary is void of any enclosing landscape



features. Views to the larger fields are obscured from Celyn Close due to a cluster of trees within the small field.

Planning Context

As mentioned above, the Site has been allocated within the Emerging LDP for 300 residential dwellings under **Policy MG2 Housing Allocations** Site Reference (5) – Land to the East of Eglwys Brewis, St Athan. This suggested allocation gives a clear indication of the councils' current position – that the development of the site is considered acceptable in principle.

The following policies are also directly relevant with regards to forming the policy context of the site:

- **Policy MG17 - Special Landscape Areas**
The site is identified within SLA 2 Upper and Lower Thaw Valley. The policy states that development will only be permitted in SLAs where the proposal can demonstrate that it would not cause unacceptable harm to the landscape character associated with the SLA.
- **Policy SP10 - Built and Natural Environment**
States that proposals must preserve and enhance the unique characteristics, including designated landscapes, the heritage coast, archaeological features and conservation areas of the vale.

Landscape Character and LANDMAP

The character of the site and surrounding area is described in Section 2 above. Below is a description of each LANDMAP aspect area in which the site lies and the evaluation associated with each classification.

Visual and Sensory

VLFGVLS805 Lias Plateau Open Rolling Lowland (Evaluation: Moderate)

The aspect area is classified as Lowland/Rolling Lowland/Open Rolling Lowland (Level 3), aesthetic qualities include an open landscape character of medium scale with a typical mosaic field pattern within a Vale landscape. The landscape is perceived as 'exposed' with long distance views obtainable. The overall evaluation for the aspect area is weighted as 'Moderate'. Long views to the coast can be experienced from some parts of the aspect area. The condition of the aspect area is considered to be good generally, with a fairly consistent character. Eroding fences which are starting to diminish the field boundary pattern are a detracting feature identified in the aspect area. New development is also a detracting feature in the landscape but it is not considered to be a major detractor



Geological

VLFGGL863 Llanwit-St. Athan Lowland plateau (Evaluation: Outstanding)

The lowland plateau is described as a broad and dissected coastal plateau, level, with steep sided valleys with two airfields. The overall evaluation for the aspect area is weighted as 'Outstanding'. (Value: Outstanding. Condition: Outstanding. Trend: Constant), which is justified by the presence of Monkash Coast Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the aspect area.

Landscape Habitat

VLFGLLH582 Ogmore-Llantwit Arable Belt Mosaic (Evaluation: Moderate)

The aspect area is classified as Dry (relatively) Terrestrial Habitats/Mosaic/Mosaic (Level 3) with a maximum of 10% of the area under protection (predominantly made up of SSSIs). The key features of the gently undulating landscape aspect area include intensive agricultural management, large arable fields and improved grassland. The overall evaluation for the aspect area is weighted as 'Moderate'. A management recommendation for the aspect area to facilitate buffer strips at the edges of the arable fields and consideration for existing field boundaries to increase biodiversity interest where possible.

Historic Landscape

VLFGHL052 Llysworney and Llandough Regular Fieldscapes (Evaluation: High)

The aspect area is classified as Rural environment/Agricultural/Regular Fieldscapes (Level 3). The overall evaluation for the aspect area is weighted as 'High' which is justified by the rich multi-period landscape with evidence of occupation from the Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods associated with the aspect area. The well-defined field pattern comprises large regular fields punctuated by small nucleated settlements set within a fieldscape of medieval origins.

Cultural Landscape

VLFGCL039 Vale of Glamorgan Rural Landscape Other Rural (specify) (Evaluation: High)

The aspect area is classified as Influences/Material expressions/Rural/Other Rural (specify) (Level 4). The overall evaluation for the aspect area is weighted as 'High'. At a regional level, the Vale of Glamorgan is well regarded as a desirable place to live and it attracts a disproportionate number of well-heeled residents.

Suitability of the Proposed Development

The proposal is for circa 300 residential dwellings (as allocated within the draft LDP). The design has incorporated a variety of open space into the design including Public Open Space (POS);



attenuation area to the west of the site, a Local Area of Play (LAP); Local Equipped Area of Play (LEAP) and Neighbourhood Area Equipped for Play (NEAP). The two points of archaeological interest are outside the building footprint.

The landscape strategy for the site is to protect and enhance existing landscape features by introducing ecological buffers along field boundaries. Tree planting within the ecological buffer along Cowbridge Road is recommended and would greatly reduce the extent of the view into the site from this location. Open green space is proposed across the site and the two points of archaeological interest are intentionally located within green space (private and public open green space) and will therefore not be developed upon. The stream and flood zone to the west will remain undeveloped and utilised as an attenuation area.

Conclusion

This appraisal indicates that the potential effects of residential development on land off Cowbridge Road, on land east of Eglwys Brewis (allocated site), will not be detrimental to the character, designated assets or visual amenity of receptors within the local area and thus is considered acceptable in landscape and visual terms.

Based on an initial data trawl search and site visit, the site is considered to be relatively good for residential development in landscape and visual terms for the following reasons:

- The site has been considered by the Officers of the Vale of Glamorgan Planning Authority and is allocated for development in the emerging LDP under Policy MG2 (5) although, some tree removal is proposed to accommodate development in the small field;
- The site is within the Visual and Sensory Aspect Area; *Open Rolling Lowland* as identified in LANDMAP which is evaluated as **Moderate**. The character of the site conforms with the LANDMAP evaluation for the aspect area and is considered to have medium sensitivity. There are no views to the coast available from the site or immediate area surrounding the site, however, long distance views to hills are available from within the site. Vertical built features such as high voltage power lines, wind turbines and a mast are noticeable on the skyline in medium and long distance views. The MOD site detracts from the character of the immediate area surrounding the site; dilapidated buildings are seen on the edge of the MOD site where Cowbridge Road meets St Athan road;
- Edge of settlement location with residential estates to the east and west of the site;
- Strong field pattern with two large fields and one small field; vegetated field boundaries will be retained and enhanced and an ecological buffer will be incorporated into the design;
- Two archaeological points of interest identified and investigated within the site boundary will remain within green space and outwith the building footprint of the proposed development;



- PRoW E1/1/1 crosses the site. The character of the route will change from a grassed path to hardstanding, hence, there will undoubtedly be some disruption to the route during construction, however, the route will be maintained by the proposed development; and
- The flood risk zone identified will function as an attenuation area, thus it will remain as green space and outwith the building footprint of the proposed development.

Visual effects

Overall, the site is generally only visible in short range views from the south, east and west and medium distance views from the north. There are a few residential properties to the west and the east of the site which will have views of the proposed development at close range. One prominent farmhouse to the north of the site will have an open view of the proposed development. Similarly, for residential receptors to the east and west, views will change from open countryside to built development for a few properties on Cowbridge Road, Tintern Close, Celyn Close and Ebbw Close. Where the site is visible at close range, it is likely to be seen in conjunction with existing built residential or industrial scale development.

Medium distance views are available from the north from higher ground. Views are available from the edge of Flemingston Conservation Area, these views are limited and filtered. There are a number of designated assets within the study area; the likely visual effects are however limited to localised PRoW, in particular, PRoW E1/1/1 which crosses through the site, although to a lesser degree.

In general, the degree of visual effects is considered both limited, and localised for the most part, for a development of 300 new homes.

Landscape Effects

The land use of the site will change from agricultural fields to built form thus the effects on the character of the landscape will be perceptible, although this effects will be limited to the site and its immediate surroundings and will not be perceived in the broader landscape.

The site is within Special Landscape Area 2 Upper and Lower Thaw Valley. SLAs are included under Policy SP 10 which aims to preserve the natural environment and heritage of the Vale. Although the development is with the SLA has been earmarked for residential development in the emerging LDP. Policy MG2 (5) states that the allocation is for 300 residential dwellings and the trees in the southern corner of the site should be retained. The scale of the proposal is in line with the policy aims, although some tree removal in the southern corner is proposed to facilitate housing. The harm caused is not considered unacceptable in landscape and visual terms as most of the trees will be retained in the southern corner. A tree constraints plan has been produced for this site and illustrates that there is a category A tree in this part of the site. The category A tree will be retained as will most of the category B trees.



Overall Conclusion

Based on EDP's consideration of landscape and visual effects, as set out above, the potential effects of the proposed development are considered limited and localised, and are not felt to be contrary to local planning policy. Indeed, they conform to emerging policy, delivering much needed housing on a site earmarked for residential development within the draft LDP. On this basis, effects on landscape character and visual amenity are considered minimal and should therefore be accorded little weight in the overall planning balancing exercise to be undertaken.

I look forward to hearing from you should you have any questions.

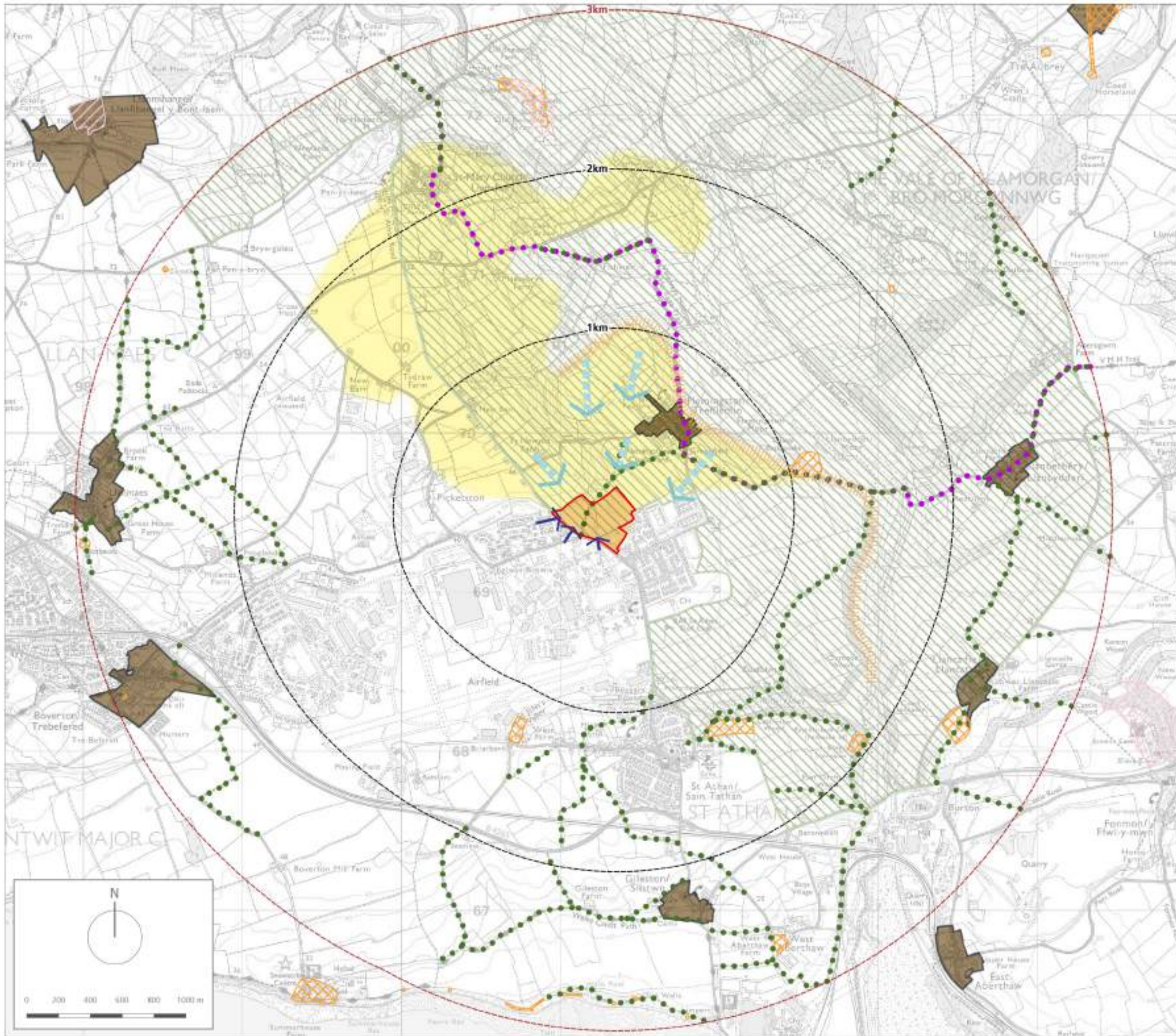
Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Maria Duignan'.

Maria Duignan

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Enc: **Plan EDP 1** – Landscape Planning Considerations and Visual Envelope
(EDP3504/09 19 September 2016 LH/MD)



-  Site Boundary
-  Range Rings (at 1km intervals)
-  3km Detailed Study Area
-  Valeways Millennium Heritage Trail
-  Public Rights of Way
-  Historic Parks and Gardens
-  Scheduled Monument
-  Conservation Area
-  Local Ridgelines
-  Approximate Extent of Visual Envelope
-  SLA 2: Upper & Lower Thaw Valley
-  MG 2(5) Site Allocation
-  Likely View Towards The Site
-  Open Close Range Views into the Site



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Edenstone Homes Ltd

project title
Land off Cowbridge Road, St Athan, Vale of Glamorgan

drawing title
Plan EDP 1: Landscape Planning Considerations and Visual Envelope

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