

Adran yr Economi a'r Seilwaith  
Department for Economy and Infrastructure



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Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**THE CHESTER TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD (A55) (JUNCTIONS 16 AND  
16A IMPROVEMENT REALIGNMENT AND SLIP ROADS) ORDER 202-**

**THE CHESTER TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD (A55) (JUNCTIONS 16 AND  
16A IMPROVEMENT REALIGNMENT AND SLIP ROADS) (SIDE ROADS)  
ORDER 202-**

**THE WELSH MINISTERS (THE CHESTER TO BANGOR TRUNK ROAD  
(A55) (JUNCTIONS 16 AND 16A IMPROVEMENT REALIGNMENT AND  
SLIP ROADS)) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER 202-**

**PROOF OF EVIDENCE**

**Jonathan Stoddard CMLI**

**WELSH GOVERNMENT, LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT**

**DOCUMENT REFERENCE: WG 1.07.02**

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## 1. Author

- 1.1 I am Jonathan Stoddard, a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (Membership No. 11257). I have been a Member of the Landscape Institute since 1988 and became a Chartered Member in 1992. I have 29 years of experience of working as a professional landscape architect, primarily within the private sector. My principal line of work is as a landscape architect undertaking landscape and visual impact assessments for a wide range of developments such as highway and infrastructure projects, border control facilities and leisure developments. I also have experience of working as environmental advisor and coordinator on highway projects.
- 1.2 I have worked for several landscape practices within Wales after first moving to Cardiff to work for Gillespies on the Ebbw Vale Garden Festival in 1990. I worked for a number of practices in South Wales before moving to North Wales in 1998 to work for Symonds in Colwyn Bay. Symonds evolved into Capita where I worked until 2019 before joining Richards Moorehead and Laing (RML) in March 2019.
- 1.3 My relevant highways experience includes the following projects:
- a) A55 Green Corridors Initiative (2020)
  - b) A483 Wrexham By-Pass – Junctions 3-6 (2019 to 2020)
  - c) A483-A489 Newtown By-Pass Project (2012 to 2019)
  - d) A487 – A496 Pont Briwet Road and Rail Viaduct (2013 to 2015)
  - e) A-One+ Area 10 Highway Network (2007 to 2009)
  - f) Wrexham Industrial Estate Access Road (2007 to 2009)
  - g) A55 Llandygai to Abergele Landscape Maintenance Contract (2001 to 2004)
  - h) A465 Aberdulais to Glynneath Trunk Road (1996)
  - i) M5 Widening Scheme (1992 to 1993)
  - j) A303 Sparkford to Ilchester (1990 to 1992).
- 1.4 I am the project Landscape Architect for the A55 Junctions Improvements scheme. My role involves the key tasks of:
- a) Landscape character assessment of the Scheme and surrounding area.
  - b) Site visits to verify aspects of the landscape character assessment
  - c) Assessment of the likely effects the proposed Scheme would have on landscape and people
  - d) Attendance at Public Information Events (PIEs)

- 1.5 The project for improvements at Junction 15 and 16 has developed so that it encompasses Junctions 14 and 16A as well. Furthermore, the two sets of junctions, namely Junctions 14 and 15 to the west at Llanfairfechan, and Junctions 16 and 16A to the east at Dwygyfylchi and Penmaenmawr, are being treated under different sets of draft Orders and Environmental Statements. This proof of evidence addresses Junctions 16 and 16A, at Penmaenmawr and Dwygyfylchi hereby referred in this proof of evidence as the 'Scheme' or the 'Junction 16 and 16A Scheme' as appropriate.
- 1.6 My Proof of Evidence provides an overview of the landscape and visual aspects of the Junction 16 and 16A Scheme and sets out the reasons for the proposed landscape and environmental mitigation.
- 1.7 The opinions expressed are my own unless I state otherwise. I have been assisted by colleagues from within the project team in the various tasks that are reported in this document. Colleagues are also presenting evidence within their specialist environmental expertise. Where a topic is covered in detail by the proof of evidence of another specialist, I provide a cross reference to the relevant proof.
- 1.8 It is not my intention to reproduce large sections of text from the ES, but simply to cross refer to, or highlight key procedural and technical matters that are pertinent to the assessment of the published Scheme. Consequently, I will refer in this Proof of Evidence to supporting material contained within the ES and the ES Supplements where relevant.
- 1.9 My involvement with the project commenced when I joined RML in March 2019 when the Scheme had been largely designed and preliminary work on the landscape mitigation and landscape and visual impact assessment had been developed by colleagues. Prior to joining RML I had previously been involved in maintenance and management contracts along the A55 and other projects in Penmaenmawr so am familiar with the location and surrounding area.
- 1.10 My Proof of Evidence covers Landscape and Visual effects and is structured in the following manner:
- Part 2 Background to the project and its setting
  - Part 3 Method of Assessment and Study Area
  - Part 4 Landscape and Visual Baseline Conditions
  - Part 5 Description of the Scheme
  - Part 6 Landscape and Visual Effects
  - Part 7 Response to Objections
  - Part 8 Conclusions and Declaration

Part 8 Appendices

**Links with other Proofs of Evidence**

1.11 I will rely on the following expert witnesses to cover their respective specialist fields:

Andrew Sumner Environment (WG 1.06)

Donna Hall Ecology and Nature Conservation (WG 1.08)

Craig Barson Noise and Vibration (WG 1.09)

## 2. Background to the Project and its Setting

- 2.1 The Junction 16 and 16A improvement is located on the coast of North Wales along the existing A55 North Wales Expressway and on the coastal plain and northern fringe of Snowdonia National Park and the Carneddau Mountain Range. The coastal setting is spectacular, with rocky headlands rising above wide-open beaches and with open views to the north across the sea to the Anglesey Coast and the mountains of Snowdonia to the south. This section of A55 Conwy to the east and Bangor to the west, constructed in the late 1980's and early 1990's, contains several feats of engineering, including the Conwy Crossing immersed tube tunnel, Penmaenbach Tunnels and Pen-y-Clip Tunnel between Junctions 15 and 18.
- 2.2 The A55 road corridor runs along the coastal plain between Penmaenmawr to the west and Dwygyfylchi to the east. Penmaenmawr is a former quarry town that developed in 1830 as a result of quarrying the igneous rock diorite. The Chester Holyhead main line railway opened in 1850 and saw a change in quarrying practices with the production of crushed rock for railway ballast transported directly from the quarry by rail. As a result of the railway, the town also grew as a seaside resort and saw the development of the promenade and Victorian seafront terrace. The town became popular with the upper classes and benefitted from the patronage of the Prime Minister William Gladstone between the mid and late 1800s, a statue commemorating his visits stands in the centre of the town overlooking the sea.
- 2.3 There are a wide range of community facilities in the town of Penmaenmawr including schools, care homes, health centre, public halls, public parks and recreation areas, shops, public houses, places of worship and a seaside promenade. The Wales Coastal Path and National Cycle Network Route 5 (NCNR5) run along the promenade and follow the A55 and the coast to the east and west.
- 2.4 Further east of Penmaenmawr lie the villages of Dwygyfylchi and Capelulo. These villages are accessible from the A55 at Junction 16A, which lies further east of Penmaenmawr and Junction 16. Junction 16A provides west bound access only. The only other means of access to the two villages is via the Sychnant Pass Road, an unclassified local road with steep gradients and tight bends that connects the two villages to the town of Conwy.
- 2.5 The Penmaenbach tunnel, immediately east of Junction 16A, was first built in 1932 and carried traffic in both directions through the Penmaen-bach headland. The tunnel remains today and now carries eastbound traffic only along the A55 towards Conwy. In 1989, the Penmaenbach to Dwygyfylchi improvement scheme opened with a new tunnel constructed for westbound traffic, together with Junction 16A for westbound access to the village. The

Penmaenmawr By-Pass between Junctions 15 and 16 was also constructed during this period of time.

- 2.6 The existing roundabout junction at Junction 16 lies approximately 1 kilometre north-east from the centre of Penmaenmawr and 900 m west from the centre of Dwygyfylchi. The Scheme will remove the existing roundabout at A55 Junction 16 and will replace it with a grade-separated junction with an overbridge and slip roads at Junction 16A. A new link road connection between Junction 16 and Junction 16A is proposed where the Junction 16 westbound slip roads would be retained. To accommodate these improvements, the total length of realigned trunk road (including slip roads and the overbridge) would be approximately 3070 m, with 1540 m of two-way link road.
- 2.7 The Scheme will provide over 2 kilometres (km) of Active Travel improvements, consisting of new off-road cycleways/footways and crossings. These works will extend from Conway Road in Penmaenmawr to the south of the improved A55 Junction 16 to Glan-Yr-Afon Road in Dwygyfylchi and along the proposed new link road. These enhancements will improve the safety of both pedestrians and cyclists, including those using the NCNR5.

### 3. Method of Assessment and Study Area

- 3.1 A landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) of the Scheme proposals has been undertaken as part of the wider Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and is presented on Chapter 9 of the Environmental Statement (ES) (Document Ref WG 3.01.01). Details of the methodology used in the landscape and visual impact assessment are set out in Volume 3 of the ES Appendix 9.1 (Document Ref WG 3.01.05) and I provide a summary of the methodology undertaken below.
- 3.2 The landscape and visual impact assessment (LVIA) was undertaken in accordance with the methodology set out in ES Appendix 9.1 and the principal guidelines:
- a) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. (GLVIA3)<sup>1</sup>; and
  - b) DMRB Volume 11 Section 3 Part 5 Landscape Effects<sup>2</sup> (Document Ref WG 4.01.68) and IAN 135/10 (Wales) 3 (Document Ref WG 4.01.69).
- 3.3 New DMRB guidance for Landscape and visual effects (LA 107) was published in September 2019<sup>4</sup> (Document Ref WG 4.01.70) and replaces DMRB Volume 11 Section 3 Part 5 and IAN 135/10 (W). Work on the screening and scoping stages of the EIA for this Scheme began in 2018. All of the assessments were well advanced by August 2019 and the landscape and visual assessment substantially completed by September 2019. Therefore, the decision was made to continue using the DMRB 2014 guidance, rather adopting the 2019 version because of the advanced state of the EIA.
- 3.4 The new guidance set out in LA107 and IAN 135/10 (W) both refer to the guidance in GLVIA3. The main difference between the old and new guidance is that:

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), Landscape Institute and Institute of Management & Assessment, published by Routledge. 2013. Hard copy available for short loan on request.  
<https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/technical/glvia3-panel/> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

<sup>2</sup> LA 107 Landscape and Visual Effects Jan 2020  
<https://standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/search/8d9a8c45-45cd-4962-a0b1-065653fcd27a> (Withdrawn) [Accessed 17/08/2021]

<sup>3</sup> Interim Advice Note 135/10, Landscape and Visual Effects Assessment (Withdrawn) Nov 2010 <https://standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/search/de6b909c-f599-4e1c-b5d0-31fe144817cb> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

<sup>4</sup> DMRB LA 107 Landscape and Visual Effects, Revision 2 Feb 2020  
<https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/search/bc8a371f-2443-4761-af5d-f37d632c5734> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

- 3.5 The old guidance (IAN 135/10 (W) and HA 205/085 (Document Ref WG 4.01.75)) requires that ‘the assignment of significance before the consideration of the effectiveness of the design and committed mitigation measures should also be undertaken, allowing for the case or reason for and the effectiveness of mitigation to be described’.
- 3.6 The new LA107 guidance cross refers to the design and mitigation hierarchy in LA104 that describes two categories of mitigation namely embedded mitigation and essential mitigation (Paragraph 3.24).
- 3.7 Embedded mitigation is reported in the project description and essential mitigation in the relevant environmental factor assessments. Paragraph 3.25 states ‘*Significance of an effect shall be reported after an assessment of the effectiveness of the design and mitigation measures (the residual effect).*’ This effectively negates the need for an assessment of significant effects both prior to, and following mitigation as required in the old guidance.
- 3.8 Environmental enhancement is referred to in the new L104 and L107 guidance. Paragraph 3.50 of LA107 states ‘*The LVIA process shall identify enhancement opportunities to form an integral part of project design for improving, reconstructing, and/or restoring the local landscape character and/or visual amenity*’.
- 3.9 The superseded guidance suggests that measures for enhancement could be dealt with through an Environmental Management Plan that would manage effects of the project during construction and beyond, rather than being considered during the design stages.

### **Landscape Baseline**

- 3.10 The physical, perceptual and cultural and social characteristics of the landscape within the study area were recorded as these individual elements combine to influence the landscape character. The landscape character of areas within the study area are broadly defined by LANDMAP<sup>6</sup>.
- 3.11 LANDMAP is an all-Wales landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated. In reviewing the LANDMAP datasets (Figure 9.3), it was considered that the character areas were set at too broad a scale and did not take sufficient consideration of the significance of the A55 road transport

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<sup>5</sup> DMRB Volume 11 Section 2 Part 5 (HA 205/08) Environmental assessment. Environmental impact assessment. Assessment and management of environmental effects (Withdrawn) <https://standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmrbr/search/ce206f03-967e-43ec-a9d9-12e533d17cb9> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

<sup>6</sup> See <https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/planning-and-development/evidence-to-inform-development-planning/landmap-the-welsh-landscape-baseline/?lang=en> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

corridor. Further analysis of the landscape character areas within an initial 2 km radius of the Scheme was therefore undertaken and the key landscape elements of the area recorded as part of the baseline assessment. This resulted in a total of 35 Local Character Areas (LCAs) being identified and these are described in Appendix 9.3 Landscape Character Area Descriptions. The landscape character areas were combined to cover both Junctions 14/15 and Junctions 16/16A as some overlapped due to the close proximity of the two Schemes.

### **Visual Baseline**

- 3.12 The visual baseline assessment describes and analyses the visual amenity that people may experience and the general views of the study area, which may be changed by the Scheme. The scope of the visual assessment was initially undertaken using desktop data and later verified in the field during the preparation of the visual baseline.
- 3.13 A Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) was plotted using Natural Resources Wales LIDAR digital terrain model<sup>7</sup> that does not include surface features such as buildings and vegetation such as woodland or plantations, hedgerows and individual trees. Heights of the major components of the Scheme taken from a 3D model of the scheme proposals were combined to generate the ZTV. This provided a broad overview of the likely visual extents and was used as a basis for the visual baseline.
- 3.14 Potential visual receptors were identified using the ZTV and verified on site during fieldwork. Fieldwork was carried out during summer 2019 following the announcement of the preferred route on 5 April 2019. Representative viewpoints were selected to assess the impact of the scheme proposals from typical visual receptors within the Zone of Influence. These are presented in Volume 3 Appendix 9.4.
- 3.15 An assessment of likely visual effects was also undertaken in the field and using the representative viewpoints. This is presented in Volume 3 Appendix 9.5 as a Visual Effects Schedule and includes an assessment of the potential effects on people at or using:
- a) Residential Properties (RP);
  - b) Non-Residential Properties (NRP);
  - c) Public Rights of Way (PRoW); and
  - d) Local Road Network (LRN).

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<sup>7</sup> See <http://lle.gov.wales/Catalogue/Item/LidarCompositeDataset/?lang=en>  
[accessed 17/08/2021]

### **Assessment of Landscape and Visual Effects**

- 3.16 The assessment of landscape and visual effects are two separate but related processes and should be clearly distinguished between each other as highlighted below:
1. Assessment of Landscape Effects: assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right; and
  2. Assessment of Visual Effects: assessing visual effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.
- 3.17 An assessment of the likely effects of the Scheme on the landscape and visual amenity was undertaken at three stages:
1. Construction;
  2. Year 1 Opening; and
  3. Year 15 after construction .
- 3.18 An assessment of the likely night-time effects of the Scheme was incorporated into the assessment and was not undertaken as a separate exercise. The existing A55 and associated traffic is an existing light source, and the Scheme is located within the existing road corridor. It was therefore considered that there is likely to be no significant change to night-time effects as a result of the Scheme as the lighting will remain within, or immediately adjacent to, the existing road corridor. Similarly, there have also been no separate seasonal assessments as observations about seasonal change have also been incorporated into the assessment.

#### Mitigation Measures

- 3.19 The DMRB guidance used in the assessment process refers to two types of mitigation measures, essential mitigation and desirable mitigation. If mitigation is defined as essential, it can be guaranteed as part of the Scheme and taken into consideration during the assessment process. The Welsh Government has the statutory power to acquire land necessary for providing essential mitigation under the Highway Act 1980 (Document Ref WG 4.01.10). Under the new DMRB guidance LA 104, essential mitigation is now classified as embedded mitigation and is included in the project description.
- 3.20 Landscape mitigation has been designed to perform various environmental functions (EFE) such as visual screening and the integration of structures and earthworks, and these are shown on the Environmental Masterplan drawings in Appendix 2.6 and described in Chapter 9<sup>8</sup>. The environmental function and landscape element codes, previously referred to in DMRB Volume 10 (Part 2

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<sup>8</sup> Paragraphs 9.7.26 – 9.7.29

HA87/01<sup>9</sup> (Document Ref WG 4.01.71) and 88/01<sup>10</sup> (Document Ref WG 4.01.72)), have now been withdrawn and replaced by DMRB LD 117 Landscape Design<sup>11</sup> (Document Ref WG 4.01.73) but remain largely the same.

### **Study Area**

- 3.21 The study area was established at a radius of 2 km (refer to Figure 9.1) from the centreline of the existing road corridor and Junction 16 roundabout and Junction 16A. This was considered a sufficient area of search to establish the baseline landscape conditions given that the extent of the Scheme is limited to within or close to the existing A55 road corridor alignment.
- 3.22 A site survey in July 2019 was carried out to verify this initial study area and to identify where potentially significant effects upon the existing landscape resource, views and visual amenity are likely to occur as a result of the Scheme. This resulted in a more focussed Scheme assessment area of approximately 500 m from the centre line being identified for landscape and visual receptors potentially affected by the Scheme.
- 3.23 Further site visits were undertaken in 2019/2020 to verify and check some aspects of the assessment.
- 3.24 The landscape and visual assessment was carried out from publicly accessible areas such as the local road network, Public Rights of Way and other public areas such as promenades and recreational areas. Individual properties were not visited or inspected during the fieldwork assessment.

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<sup>9</sup> DMRB HA 87/01 Environmental Functions Feb 2001 (Withdrawn)  
<https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/search/88c292e2-8858-4061-a83c-094f57690cf2> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

<sup>10</sup> DMRB HA 88/01 Landscape Elements Feb 2001 (Withdrawn)  
<https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/search/3e78e280-75fd-47a4-b35f-ded9524b376d> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

<sup>11</sup> DMRB LD 117 Landscape Design March 2020  
<https://www.standardsforhighways.co.uk/dmr/search/82073bde-ec0c-4d4f-8eeb-afe0ace3c639> [Accessed 17/08/2021]

## 4. Landscape and Visual Baseline Conditions

- 4.1 The baseline landscape and visual conditions were recorded through a combination of desk-based information and field surveys. Field surveys were conducted between 2017 and 2019. A full description of the landscape and baseline conditions is covered in Section 9.5 of Chapter 9 Landscape. I will now summarise the key components of the landscape and visual amenity of the area and as experienced by people immediately surrounding the Scheme.

### **Landscape Baseline**

- 4.2 The study area covers a wide area up to 2 km and I do not intend to describe all the landscape elements and wider landscape character within this area but focus on those close to the Scheme extents and directly affected by the proposals.
- 4.3 The Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) boundary lies approximately 310 m south-east of the existing roundabout and on the western fringe of Dwygyfylchi. Junction 16A and Glan-yr-Afon Road that leads to the village of Dwygyfylchi, lie on the boundary of the National Park that extends north to encompass the Penmaen-bach headland, tunnels and Penmaen-bach Point.
- 4.4 Some of the landscape character areas lie within the National Park, either wholly or in part and were considered in the assessment. However, during the initial stages of the assessment, it was not considered likely that the Scheme would have any significant effects on land within the SNPA and therefore none of the policies or designations within the SNPA boundary were considered further.

### **Landscape Designations**

- 4.5 There are no World Heritage Sites (WHS) within the study area with the closest being Conwy Castle around 4 km to the east and Beaumaris Castle around 12 km to the west on the southern coast of Anglesey.
- 4.6 North Arllechwedd Historic Landscape is listed on The Register of Landscapes of Outstanding Historic Interest in Wales by Cadw. The designation covers an extensive area south of Penmaenmawr, rising above the hillside slopes south of the town and extending towards the upland areas of the Carneddau. There are several Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs) recorded within this area.
- 4.7 There are eight listed buildings within 1 km of Junction 16 and the A55 corridor. All are listed at Grade 2 and are post-medieval in date. They include Penmaenmawr Railway Station ; Horeb Chapel and the Church of St Seriol. There are also ten buildings on a draft local list maintained by Conwy Borough Council.

- 4.8 There are no Registered Parks and Gardens within 1 km of Junctions 16 or 16A and the A55 corridor and none within the wider area.
- 4.9 There are four Conservation Areas within the community of Penmaenmawr. The Penmaenmawr Town Centre and Pen y Cae extend east of the town centre and fall within 1 km of Junction 16 with the town centre area covering part of Conwy Road and Pen y Cae part of Colwyn Old Road. Neither of the two areas are directly affected by the Scheme.

#### **Landscape Character**

- 4.10 LANDMAP is an all-Wales landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated. In reviewing the LANDMAP datasets (Figure 9.6), it was considered that the character areas were set at too broad a scale and did not take sufficient consideration of the significance of the A55 road transport corridor. Further analysis of the landscape character areas within an initial 2 km radius of the Scheme was therefore undertaken and the key landscape elements of the area recorded as part of the baseline assessment.
- 4.11 There are three LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Areas within 0.5 km of Junction 16 and 16A (refer to Figure 9.6) namely:
1. Llanfairfechan/Penmeanmawr (SNPVS074)
  2. Carneddau Uplands (SNPVS072)
  3. Penmaenbala (SNPVS078)
- 4.12 The whole of the Scheme extents lies within Llanfairfechan/Penmeanmawr (SNPVS074) that is described as a “narrow coastal area, tightly hemmed in by steeply rising mountains to the south and sea to the north”...and “Promenades abut adjacent sandy beaches but access points and tranquillity are notably eroded by the A55 road.”<sup>12</sup>
- 4.13 These areas were further sub-divided with a more detailed landscape character assessment (refer to Figure 9.7 and Appendix 9.3 Landscape Character Area Descriptions). Seven landscape character areas (LCA's) were identified within 0.5 km of Junctions 16 and 16A as follows:
- a) LCA 2 Penmaenmawr Beach
  - b) LCA 9 A55 Trunk Road and Railway (Pen-y-Clip to Penmaenbach)
  - c) LCA 10 Pentyffryn Pasture and Parkland
  - d) LCA 16 Penmaenmawr Pant-yr-Afon

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<sup>12</sup> NRW Survey Details for SNPVS074 – 2021-08-17, Q3 Summary Description  
[https://landmap-portal.naturalresources.wales/view\\_survey.php?survey\\_id=4911](https://landmap-portal.naturalresources.wales/view_survey.php?survey_id=4911)  
[Accessed 17/08/2021]

- e) LCA 17 Dwygyfylchi
  - f) LCA 26 Pant-yr-Afon Pasture
  - g) LCA 34 Allt Wen Moorland
- 4.14 LCA 9 - Pen-y-Clip to Penmaenbach is the existing A55 road corridor and the other six local landscape character areas that surround this LCA and are heavily influenced by the presence of the road and associated traffic. The landscape value of this LCA is considered to be low and of poor quality, highly urban in character with some significant engineering features and structures such as overbridges, signs and gantries. The road corridor is elevated on an embankment in some sections as it crosses the low lying coastal plain and Pendyffryn Pasture and Parkland north-east of Dwygyfylchi. Please refer to Volume 1 Chapter 9 of the ES where the landscape character of the area is described in Paragraphs 9.5.56 to 9.5.76.
- 4.15 The A55 road corridor is well used with around 35,000 vehicles per day<sup>13</sup> creating significant noise that exceeds acceptable levels to nearby residential properties east of the existing Junction 16 roundabout junction at Maes y Llan on the northern fringe of Dwygyfylchi. This residential area was identified as a Priority Area under the Environmental Noise Directive (END) mapping<sup>14</sup>. The traffic using the A55 road corridor is also audible from some upland areas above Dwygyfylchi such as Allt Wen and Foel Lus and within Snowdonia National Park and detracts from some perceptual qualities such as scenic quality and tranquillity.
- 4.16 The key landscape elements that define the landscape character of the Scheme Assessment Area (within 0.5 km of the existing Junction 16 and 16A and proposed improvement Scheme) lie within, and immediately adjacent to the existing road corridor. The road corridor is a significant man-made engineering feature, urban in nature, and varies in width between approximately 25 m to 30 m with the existing roundabout junction measuring approximately 55 m in diameter.
- 4.17 The northern verge of the road corridor is defined by vehicle restraint barriers and a grass verge that slopes down from the carriageway to the route of the National Cycle Network Route 5 that runs at a lower level and parallel to the A55 between Junctions 16 and 16A. The northern verge of the cycle route is defined by a chain link fence for much of its length, that also forms the boundary of the Chester to Holyhead railway lands.
- 4.18 The railway line runs parallel and at approximately the same level as the A55 road corridor. Fragmented linear belts of roadside plantation and scrub

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<sup>13</sup> ES Chapter 14 All Travellers - Table 14.1

<sup>14</sup> ES Chapter 13 Noise and Vibration Paragraph 13.6.12

vegetation screen the railway in parts, but for most of this section the views from the A55 corridor are open and across the railway to the sea and Liverpool Bay and coast of Anglesey, Puffin Island and far-reaching views north-east towards the Great Orme.

- 4.19 The southern verge of the A55 road corridor is largely defined by grass verge with some sections of footpath and hedgerow, with open fields to the south. There are dense roadside plantations where the road corridor passes close to the residential properties of Maes y Llan on the outskirts of Dwygyfylchi. It is understood that these plantations were included as mitigation measures for screening the properties as part of the Penmaenbach to Dwygyfylchi improvement scheme.
- 4.20 The Shell Orme petrol filling station and Puffin Café occupy a parcel of land east of the existing Junction 16 roundabout and properties of Maes-y-Llan. There is an area of car parking adjacent to the café and a pedestrian footbridge that crosses the A55 and railway providing access to the beach.
- 4.21 The Afon Gyrach river corridor passes beneath the A55 in culverts east of the Shell Garage and Puffin Café flowing north towards the sea after passing through the village of Dwygyfylchi.
- 4.22 The road corridor widens close to Junction 16A where the eastbound carriageway swings north around the Penmaenbach headland and the westbound carriageway emerges from the Penmaenbach Tunnel and forms Junction 16A with Glan-yr-Afon Road. Here the central reserve is wide and composed of roadside plantations, areas of scrub and rough grassland.

#### **Visual Baseline**

- 4.23 The study area is characterised by its generally high scenic quality due to its spectacular coastal setting at the foothills of Snowdonia. To the north and north-west there are far reaching and expansive views from the existing Junction 16 and surrounding area across Conwy Bay to Penmon Point Lighthouse and Puffin Island (approximately 9.5 km distant). To the north-east there are far reaching views across Conwy Bay towards the Great Orme, approximately 6.5 km distant. The views are extensive and highly scenic, especially when seen against the mountainous backdrop of the Carneddau Mountains and Penmaen-bach Headland.
- 4.24 To the east, Penmaen-bach is a prominent rocky headland that descends steeply to the coast as a visual barrier preventing views towards Conwy and further east. Views to the south-east and south are similarly contained by the steeply rising land of the mountains Allt Wen (255 AOD), Craigyfedwen (252 AOD) and Foel Lus (362 AOD). To the west views are contained by Penmaenmawr Mountain and Graiglwyd Quarry that rise steeply above the former quarry town of Penmaenmawr.

- 4.25 The main and highly significant visual detractor in the area is the A55 road corridor, a ribbon of transport infrastructure with a collection of unsightly elements assembled as a continuous linear man-made feature. The road corridor is also highly visible during night-time particularly around Junction 16 and the coastal strip either side with vehicles also adding to the lighting levels during night-time.
- 4.26 The key visual receptors are divided into the following categories that are presented in section 9.6 of the ES Chapter 9 and also referred to in Appendix 9.5 Visual Effects Schedules:
- a) Residential Properties (RP)
  - b) Non-Residential Properties (NRP)
  - c) Public Rights of Way (PRoW)
  - d) Land with Public Access (LPA)
  - e) Roads and Transport Routes (RTR)
- 4.27 Of the five categories, residential properties are categorised as the most sensitive<sup>15</sup> and users of roads and transport routes the least sensitive. The visual amenity of the residential properties is therefore the focus of my evidence.
- 4.28 The village of Dwygyfylchi is elevated on the hillside above the A55 road corridor to the south and many properties overlook the road corridor and have far reaching views across the sea towards the coast of Anglesey, Puffin Island and the Great Orme. The north facing aspect of many properties seek to maximise the view of the sea and this, in many cases, is a highly valued aspect of visual amenity for people resident in these properties.
- 4.29 In addition to the general aspect described above, some properties that lie close to the existing A55 and that are likely to experience most change as a result of the Scheme proposals are listed below and illustrated on Figures 9.10 and 9.11 and described in Appendix 9.5 Visual Effects Schedule. Most of the residential properties likely to experience change in their visual amenity are located south of the existing road corridor and are listed from west to east as follows: -
- a) Properties on Ysguborwen Road (south) (RP13)
  - b) Properties on Ysguborwen Road (north) (RP14)
  - c) 1-20 Maes-y-Llan (RP16)
  - d) 02-58 Maes-y-Llan (RP17)

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<sup>15</sup> ES Chapter 9 Table 9.21 Receptor Sensitivity and Typical Descriptors

- e) Properties 1-20 Gwel-y-Mor (RP20)
- f) Properties 1-38 Cae Gwynan (RP21)
- g) Pendyffryn Hall Caravan and Country Club (RP25)

4.30 Other people that that may have a visual experience and connection with the existing A55 road corridor and are likely to be affected by the Scheme include:

- a) Non-residential properties of The Oasis and Shell Orme Garage (NRP03 and NRP04)
- b) Non-residential property 'The Gladstone' Public House
- c) Maes y Llan Football Pitch (LPA3)
- d) Users of public rights of way and long-distance footpath of the Wales Coastal Path (WCP) and National Cycle Network Route 5 (NCNR5)
- e) Local Road Network (LRN)

## 5. Description of the Scheme

- 5.1 A full description of the Scheme can be found in ES Volume 1 Chapter 2 (Document Ref WG 3.01.01) and also in the Scheme Assessment Report (SAR) (Document Ref WG 4.03.02). This section of my evidence describes the Scheme in relation to the main landscape and visual aspects associated with the Scheme and landscape mitigation measures that have been embedded into the design of the Scheme. Reference is also made to the Environmental Masterplan (EMP) in Appendix 2.6 (Document Ref WG 3.01.03).
- 5.2 The Scheme description and an assessment of the potential effects is therefore described under the following headings:
- a) A55 Junction 16/16A improvements
  - b) Local Side Road improvements
  - c) Active Travel “mini-schemes”
  - d) Scheme Alternatives
  - e) A55 Junction 16/16A improvements
- 5.3 There are three components of the A55 junction improvement Scheme:
1. Removal of the existing Junction 16 roundabout and replacement with a through-carriageway for A55 traffic and westbound on and off slip roads connecting to a new four-way roundabout with connecting arms to the local road network.
  2. A link road east from the new roundabout junction to Junction 16A running parallel and south of the existing A55, Shell Orme Garage and Puffin Cafe with green infrastructure and a false cutting to screen the A55 and link road from Dwygyfylchi to the south.
  3. A height separated junction at Junction 16A with slip roads in both directions and side road connection to Glan-yr-Afon Road.

### *Component 1: Existing Junction 16 Roundabout*

- 5.4 The existing roundabout at Junction 16 would be removed together with the mature roadside plantations on the southern verge to the east and west. The plantations contain a large percentage of evergreen species within a mixed woodland and are now a significant landscape feature within the road corridor. A new four-armed roundabout junction approximately 40 m in diameter would be constructed approximately 15 m south of the A55 at a slightly higher level with west bound on and off slip roads. The roundabout would also form a connection with Conway Road to the west and a connection to the new link road to the east. Ysguborwen Road will be

realigned and form a connection with the new link road. A new access for the non-residential property the Oasis would be made off Ysguborwen Road.

- 5.5 The new section of the A55 dual carriageway will enable a continual flow of traffic with westbound access on and off the main carriageway. The northern verge of the new carriageway would remain largely as existing with the NCNR5 and safety barriers retained. An area of landscape mitigation would be planted with low groundcover and tree species to maintain coastal views while enhancing the appearance of the northern verge together with new grass verges planted with bulbs.
- 5.6 South of the A55 dual carriageway would be an area of verge between the westbound carriageway and slip roads that would be planted with groundcover and amenity trees, as would the centre of the roundabout.
- 5.7 There would be two areas of soft estate either side of the roundabout between Conway Road and the slip roads. The area to the west of the roundabout would contain an area for surface water attenuation and the area to the east planted with amenity tree and shrub planting to provide visual separation between the westbound slip road and Conway/Ysguborwen Road.
- 5.8 The southern verge of Conway Road and roadside plantation would be retained and protected. There would be a requirement for some management of the existing trees required such as crown lifting and pruning to prevent encroachment on to the non-motorised way proposed along the southern verge of Conway Road.
- 5.9 South of the roundabout, the existing plantation would be retained and protected, and an area of verge planted with groundcover and ornamental trees to enhance the visual amenity of the new junction. The existing mature trees within the grounds of the Oasis would be unaffected by the Scheme. Ornamental hedge planting is proposed along the northern boundary of the property to enhance the visual screen.

#### *Component 2: Link Road*

- 5.10 A new link road running roughly parallel to the A55 on the south side would commence at the new roundabout. Extending eastwards, it would then pass a new T-junction with Ysguborwen Road, affording access to the western part of Dwygyfylchi. It would then pass close to the north side of houses in Maes-y-Llan before looping round the south side of Puffin Café and Service Station to meet the new grade separated Junction 16A. Glan-Yr-Afon Road, to Dwygyfylchi and Capelulo, would meet with the link road at a T-junction close to Junction 16A. The total length of new road between the extent of the changes to the side roads, would be approximately 1,530 m.

- 5.11 The link road would bypass Dwygyfylchi, but bring traffic closer to some residential areas, in particular to properties on the northern edge of Maes-y-Llan.
- 5.12 The A55 is recognised locally as a source of traffic noise and as an intrusion into popular views to the sea. The design and mitigation strategy has been developed to address these concerns. The strategy is based on the provision of high-quality linear green infrastructure forming a landscape corridor on the south side of the expressway and the proposed link road.
- 5.13 The corridor would include retained existing roadside vegetation and public green space, dedicated Public Open Space, new mass planting of roadside trees, shrubs and grassland and area of new Public Open Space. The corridor would include cycleways and footpaths and would connect with existing public rights of way and crossings over the A55. The existing footbridge adjacent to the services would be replaced by a fully accessible Equality Act 2010<sup>16</sup>-compliant structure and ramps. An additional crossing over the Expressway would be provided at the Junction 16A with the junction overbridge. A key feature of the green corridor would be noise mitigation from Junction 16 to east of the Shell Orme Garage and Puffin Café. The noise mitigation takes the form of an earth bank, or false cutting, although at Maes y Llan a vertical barrier with tree and shrub planting is used due to the constrained nature of the site adjacent to the road corridor. Discussions regarding the detailed design of both noise and visual mitigation in this area is ongoing with local residents.
- 5.14 East of Maes-y-Llan, an existing area of public open space used as a kickabout area would be re-positioned and some of the land taken to form a false cutting. The kick about area would be re-graded and re-seeded.
- 5.15 An area of new public open space north-east of the housing development Gwel-y-Mor would be created as an area for general amenity and with a network of footpaths connecting the residential area to the new ramped footbridge across the A55 and railway providing access to the beach.
- 5.16 The false cutting will rise to around 5 m in height to provide screening to all or most vehicles on the proposed link road and the existing A55 from residential properties within Dwygyfylchi. The north side of the false cutting, facing towards the A55, will be formed at a gradient of between 1: and 1:3 in keeping with typical roadside cuttings and embankments. These slopes would be planted with native coastal trees and shrubs. Slopes on the south side will be formed to a shallower and more natural slopes to blend with the natural ground. In some places a stone wall will be added along the crest of the false cutting to integrate it with some local landscape features.

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<sup>16</sup> [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

- 5.17 The landscape corridor would provide permanent separation of the transport corridor from residential areas. In accordance with the Welsh Minister's Green Corridor Initiative<sup>17</sup>, the green space provided as part of the scheme would be developed to provide connectivity and habitat, and link with the habitats provided by the Afon Gyrach, to enhance local biodiversity in accordance with the requirements of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016<sup>18</sup> (Document Ref WG 4.01.01).

*Component 3: Junction 16A*

- 5.18 Junction 16A would be a height separated junction with overbridge with east and west bound slip roads approximately 500 m south-west of the Penmaenbach Tunnel western portal. The junction would occupy low lying ground and, therefore, require substantial earthworks to form the embankments of the junction to support the slip roads and overbridge.
- 5.19 North of the junction there would be new connections made with the NCNR5 cycle route that would be realigned slightly to accommodate the new junction.
- 5.20 South of the new junction would be substantial areas of soft estate with embankments up to approximately 7 m in height. These areas would be planted with native trees and shrubs designed to mitigate the visual impact of the junction from visual receptors to the south such as users of public rights of way within the Snowdonia National Park, Pendyffryn Caravan Park and users of Glan-yr-Afon Road.

***Local Side Road Improvements***

- 5.21 The existing highway network would be modified at a number of locations where the proposed routes would join or cross existing routes at the following locations:
- a) Glan-yr-Afon Road
  - b) Ysguborwen Road
  - c) Conway Road
- 5.22 The improvements to Glan-yr-Afon Road would involve localised widening works to accommodate a non-motorised way along the western verge. This would require the removal of a hedgerow and some hedgerow trees and reconstruction of an existing stone wall or clawdd and re-planting of trees to replace those lost as part of the improvement works.

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<sup>17</sup> See <https://gov.wales/green-corridors-improve-gateways-wales>, published July 2018 [Accessed 17/08/2021]

<sup>18</sup> [Environment \(Wales\) Act 2016 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2016/12)

5.23 Other local side road improvement works have been covered under the description of the Junction 16 improvements.

*Active Travel “Mini-schemes”*

5.24 The Scheme includes a number of Active Travel measures and proposed improvements to walking and cycling routes that are referred to in the ES as mini-schemes<sup>19</sup>. There is a new footbridge proposed to replace the existing with improved accessible ramps adjacent to the existing Puffin Cafe and two mini-schemes for non-motorised users:

1. NMU Mini-Scheme 1: Improvements to Glan-yr-Afon Road; and
2. NMU Mini-Scheme 2: Improvements to Conway Road.

5.25 The effects on landscape and visual amenity caused as a result of these Active Travel improvements and mini schemes have previously been described under Paragraphs 5.8 and 5.17 and are not considered to be significant.

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<sup>19</sup> ES Volume 1 Paragraphs 2.5.17–2.5.19

## 6. Landscape and Visual Effects

- 6.1 The Junction 16/16A scheme is for a new junction within the existing road corridor and also incorporates works to side roads and measures for Active Travel. There are also some alternatives to parts of the Scheme still under consideration that have arisen following the preparation and publication of the ES in March 2021.
- 6.2 The Scheme has been subject to a number of design iterations, and considerations have been given to mitigate adverse effects wherever possible. Landscape mitigation measures have been identified and embedded into the design proposals so that they can be delivered as part of the Scheme and within the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process.
- 6.3 The current Scheme is presented in the ES and the Environmental Masterplans (EMP) in Appendix 2.6.
- 6.4 Residual effects are those effects that remain with mitigation measures in place, and this section of my evidence summarises the residual effects that the Scheme will have on the landscape of the area and the visual amenity experienced by people.

### Landscape Effects

- 6.5 The existing A55 road corridor runs along the North Wales Coast parallel with the main Holyhead to Chester Railway Line and on the northern fringe of Snowdonia National Park. The road corridor contains several major engineering features along its length between Bangor and Conwy and connects several towns and coastal communities in the region including the former quarry towns of Penmaenmawr and Llanfairfechan. The existing road corridor between Penmaenmawr and Dwygyfylchi was constructed in the late 1980's and involved extensive planting along its length to screen the road from nearby properties and to integrate the road into the localised landscape.
- 6.6 The Junction 16/16A improvement Scheme provides replacement junctions within or adjacent to the existing road corridor, together with adaptations to the local road network and provisions for Active Travel such as footpaths and cycleways. These represent similar features that occur within the existing road corridor and therefore no significant changes to the landscape character of the area that is currently dominated by the road corridor.
- 6.7 Junction 16A and the new link road would have some adverse effects on the landscape character of LCA 10 Pedyffryn Pasture and Parkland. The landscape character would be significantly affected during the construction period causing direct physical impact through site clearance of roadside vegetation, adjacent hedgerows and earthworks operations. The Scheme requires a significant amount of land within this area for the construction of

the link road and false cutting. Land is also earmarked for a site compound in the fields west of Glan-yr-Afon Road.

- 6.8 The widening of the road corridor would result in the loss of remnant coastal plain and pastoral land to the south of the existing road corridor. This would have a detrimental effect on the landscape character of Pendyffryn Pasture that encompasses the coastal plain at the foot of the Penmaen-bach headland and north east of Dwygyfylchi. On completion of construction the impact would subside and gradually diminish as the landscape mitigation measures start to establish. By Year 15 the landscape mitigation would be established and would integrate the overbridge, link road and associated structures and landform into the localised landscape. Overall, the landscape effect caused by the Scheme on LCA10 by Year 15 would represent no change to the landscape character of the area and with the soft estate well established would have a neutral effect.
- 6.9 There would be no significant adverse effects on any landscape designations. However, the Scheme is likely to have some localised impacts on areas within the Snowdonia National Park during the construction period due to disruption caused by plant used in the construction of Junction 16A. However, once completed, the Scheme will be seen in the context of the existing A55 road corridor and the new junction integrated into the localised area following establishment of the landscape mitigation measures.
- 6.10 The link road would substantially widen the existing A55 road corridor between Junction 16 and Junction 16A, a distance of approximately 2 km. This would not represent a significant change to the existing landscape character of the road corridor as the built elements would be of a similar character to the baseline conditions. The Scheme would encroach into the area south and towards Dwygyfylchi and have a detrimental effect on the landscape character as described above but this is not considered to be significant.
- 6.11 The Scheme may provide potential opportunities for the further development of land between the A55 road corridor and the settlement boundary of Dwygyfylchi. This would be an indirect impact and consequence of the Scheme rather than a specific impact. This would have the potential of further encroachment towards the settlement boundary of Dwygyfylchi that has progressively expanded towards the existing A55 road corridor with new residential development at Gwel-y-Mor and further residential development consented at Y Bluen Goch on the outskirts of Dwygyfylchi.

### **Visual Effects**

- 6.12 The existing A55 road corridor is overlooked by many properties within Dwygyfylchi. The open aspect of the view to the north, across the road corridor towards the open sea and with views of the Anglesey coast, Puffin

Island and the Great Orme is of considerable value afforded by the elevated nature of the village and individual properties set on the rising hillside to the south. The Scheme through the inclusion of the false cutting and extensive planting, would provide beneficial effects to residential receptors of high sensitivity on the outskirts of Dwygyfylchi afforded by the landscape mitigation that would screen views of the A55 road corridor and link road while retaining views north across open sea towards Conwy Bay and the Great Orme. Views of passing traffic at night would also be screened all year round by the false cutting topped with a masonry wall or clawdd.

- 6.13 The Scheme includes mitigation measures to reduce the landscape and visual impact in the form of extensive earthworks that would be planted with trees and shrubs. There would be a false cutting south of the A55 and new link road between Junction 16 and Junction 16A. Junction 16A would also involve extensive earthworks that would be planted and grass seeded to the south where it connects to Glan yr Afon Road and Dwygyfylchi. The tree and shrub planting would take some time to establish but over time would integrate the Scheme into the localised landscape. The result of the mitigation measures would mean that the A55 and link road would be screened from the views of nearby residential areas such as those along Ysguborwen Road, Gwel y Mor and Cae Gwynan while keeping open views of the sea beyond. The Scheme would pass closer to the residential properties at Maes y Llan, but existing views north across the open sea from the properties would be retained.
- 6.14 It is understood that the details of the landscape mitigation at Maes-y-Llan is subject to ongoing consultation with local residents who we understand wish to retain views across the road corridor north towards the open sea. This also includes further consideration of noise mitigation measures proposed for reduction of noise levels that are currently experienced by the residents. This issue is also dealt with in the evidence of my colleague Craig Barson (WG 1.09)).
- 6.15 Views south from the A55 road corridor would be contained by the roadside planting and earthworks between Junction 16 and Junction 16A while retaining distant views of landmarks to the east and west and the mountainous backdrop to the south. This green corridor would create a continuous band of value to the visual amenity experienced by motorists and non-motorised users of the link road with added benefits to biodiversity.
- 6.16 Landscape mitigation planting around Junction 16 and Junction 16A would integrate the structure and associated earthworks into the localised landscape while creating areas of visual amenity for users of the local road network and create an attractive entrance at the gateways to the town of Penmaenmawr and village of Dwygyfylchi.

- 6.17 Finally, it should be noted that the visual impact of the Scheme during the site clearance and construction phase of the project would cause significant short-term disruption to landscape and general amenity of the area and nearby residential properties. This would be extremely difficult to mitigate against due to the elevated nature of the village and wider area with open views to the north. The most effective mitigation would be to minimise the programme for the works to an absolute minimum and this would be a matter for the main contractor to address in their work programme.

## 7. Response to Objections

- 7.1 Objections to the Scheme have been made that raise matters that fall within the scope of my proof of evidence or that of one of my colleagues. I will address issues raised by objections as themes without referring specifically to the name and address of the Objector.

*Objection: Impact of the Scheme on people residing in properties at Maes-y-Llan*

- 7.2 A number of residents that reside in properties at Maes-y-Llan and have objected to the Scheme on the grounds of increased noise and loss of visual amenity. It is understood that further consultation is ongoing with the residents and considerations being given to the detailed design of the land between the Maes-y-Llan properties and the link road that would contain both landscape mitigation and acoustic noise barriers.

## 8. Conclusion and Declaration

- 8.1 My proof of evidence includes facts which I regard as being relevant to the opinions which I have expressed, and the Inquiry's attention has been drawn to any matter which would affect the validity of that opinion.
- 8.2 As a landscape architect I have endeavoured and sought, with the engineering and other environmental specialists in the team, to minimise impacts of the Scheme and to optimise the effectiveness of proposed mitigation.
- 8.3 In my opinion the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, has been carried out and published in accordance with legislation and professional guidance.
- 8.4 In my opinion the development of measures to mitigate the landscape and visual effects of the Scheme are effective, justifiable and achievable. However, it should be acknowledged that there will be significant disruption to the landscape and visual amenity of the area and local residents during the construction stages of the Scheme. These impacts are difficult to mitigate against but will lessen once the Scheme is operational and reduce further as the landscape mitigation measures become established. Overall, and in terms of landscape and visual amenity, it is considered that the Scheme would provide some beneficial effects.
- 8.5 I believe the facts I have stated in this proof of evidence are true and that the opinions expressed are correct.
- 8.6 I understand my duty to the Inquiry to assist it with matters within my expertise and believe that I have complied with that duty.