

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

**Land to the South East of Weston-Under-Penyard
Herefordshire**



December 2014

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 DNS Planning and Design is commissioned by the landowner Mr D Mills to undertake a landscape and visual impact assessment of a proposed residential scheme of approximately 80 new dwellings in support of an outline planning application on land adjacent to the south east of Weston-Under-Penyard referred to hereafter as 'the site'. The site is approximately 4.9 hectares in area and lies adjacent the settlement boundary of the village and between the established residential area of Hunsdon Manor Gardens and the country lane known as Bury Hill (see Plan A1).

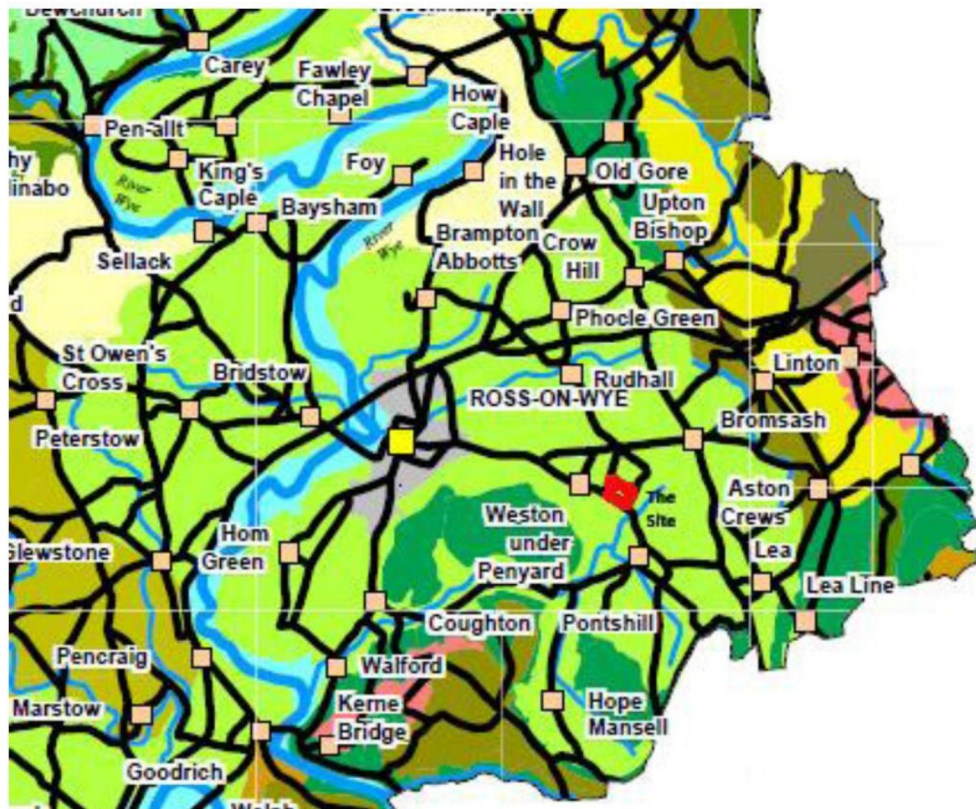


Plan A1: Site Location

- 1.2 The objective of the study is to identify and assess whether the site has the capacity to absorb any potential landscape and visual impacts of a residential scheme on the landscape context and to consider the likely significance of the effects of this type of development upon:
- **Landscape character** – analysis of the effects on the landscape receptors caused by changes in the elements and qualities as a result of the development.
 - **Visual amenity** – analysis of the effects upon potential viewers and viewing groups caused by changes in the appearance of the landscape as a result of the development.

2.0 Landscape Designations

- 2.1 The site lies approximately 2km of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) which is a nationally important landscape designation. It lies within the Principle Settled Farmlands landscape character type as identified by the Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment (HLCA). The landscape is fairly typical of this landscape type as it is undulating and cloaked in a patchwork of managed agricultural fields. The boundary hedgerows that surround the majority of the site are a primary characteristic of this character type, a character that should be 'conserved and enhanced' as stated within the recommendations of the HLCA. The character area is shown on Plan A2 below.



Plan A2: Extract from Herefordshire Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.2 Penyard Hill and Park is located to the south and is designated as a Special Wildlife Site and Local Nature Reserve. The site itself does not appear to have any specific planning or landscape designations.
- 2.3 The AONB is guided by the **Wye Valley AONB Management Plan (2014-2019)** which has the following strategic themes and aims:

- *Conserving and, where necessary, enhancing the natural beauty of our unique landscape is the primary theme.*
- *Planning the protection of the AONB through appropriate development and transport*
- *Safeguarding rural industries and local socio-economic needs that maintain vital communities*
- *Promoting and ensuring that the general public are enjoying the AONB in sustainable ways*
- *Managing and governing the AONB effectively to ensure we are achieving success together*

3.0 Character of the Site and its Context

3.1 The macro landscape context of the site can be described as an attractive rolling rural landscape of wooded hillsides and agricultural valleys interspersed with villages and hamlets. The village is nestled within a shallow valley with the elevated wooded hillside of Penyard Park prominent in the landscape to the south. The landscape falling from this hillside towards the A40 and then rises gently to the north east towards Bromash.

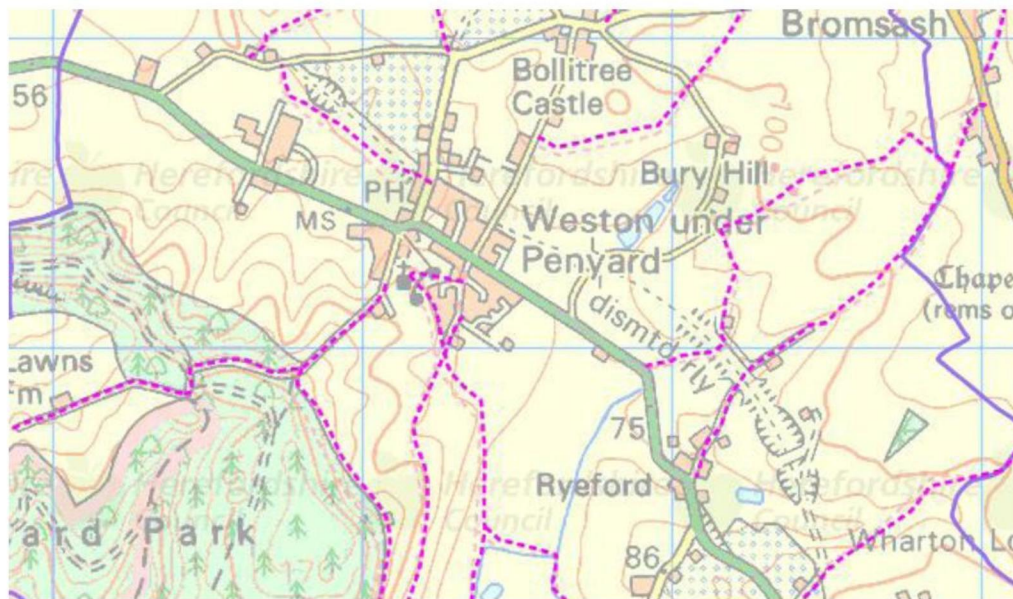
3.2 The site itself is placed within a village fringe type landscape character nestled on the south eastern edge of Weston-Under-Penyard. The village centre and its associated shops and services lie within 500m to the west and south within comfortable walking distance and include a primary school, public house, community centre, bus stops and a church. The character of the site can be described as village fringe influenced by a series of urbanising and landscape elements as follows:

- Established residential areas to the north west and south west.
- The A40 main road, street lights and bus stops.
- The wooded hillside of Penyard Park
- Undulating farmland to the north and east.
- Bushy vegetated established hedgerows and with some mature trees along the field boundaries.

- 3.3 The site itself is made up of two paddocks of semi-improved grassland and is being used for cattle grazing. It is enclosed by bushy mature hedgerows containing some mature native trees (see Fig DNS-01.1: Landscape and Visual Survey).

Public Footpaths

- 3.4 A public right of way (PROW) in the form of an unsurfaced footpath as identified by Herefordshire County Council runs along the fields to the north connecting Bury Hill and Rectory Lane. Three PROWs crisscross the hillside the elevated hillside to the south linking the village to Penyard and Pontshill all as shown on Plan A3 below.



Plan A3: Herefordshire County Council Public Rights of Way

4.0 The Development Proposals

- 4.1 This study is to support an outline planning application proposing the development of 80 dwellings of which 40% will be affordable. Vehicular access is proposed via a new single point directly off the A40.

5.0 Landscape Led Design Evolution

- 5.1 It should be noted that as a result of an initial landscape and visual assessment survey which involved a preliminary assessment of the existing landscape and visual conditions of the site and its context for its suitability as a location to deliver residential development, a number of initial design principles were put forward as

the basis of the starting point for the design evolution. The proposals are therefore landscape led with an early understanding of the landscape and visual character of the site and its context. An interactive design process between the designers has then evolved the scheme to produce a more refined and amended layout in response to the other range of baseline studies. The initial design principles on which the master plan has been evolved are listed as follows:

- A. Retain all of the boundary hedgerows and trees as this vegetation helps greatly to conceal the site from local public view points.
- B. Reinforce the existing landscape structure to improve the low and neglected image of the area and create a new defensible boundary between the village and the open countryside.
- C. Reinforce the neglected hedgerow along the north east boundary by implementing a belt of new native trees with Oak as the prominent species to create a strong defensible boundary with the open countryside.
- D. Implement a new hedgerow incorporating tree planting (specimen Oak trees) where possible along the southern boundary with the A40 to improve the image and structure of this visually and physically untidy boundary.
- E. Rear gardens should be placed backing onto the north west boundary with the existing residential area known as Hunsdon Manor Gardens.
- F. Development should be of a low density with decreasing density towards the south east boundary to suit this context.
- G. Internally the scheme should contain a clear landscape structure of trees along new access roads and within rear gardens to help assimilate it with the surrounding landscape context.
- H. New houses should be placed to maximise overlooking onto the new public open space.
- I. Lighting design within the new development should be minimised and designed to be sensitive to the landscape context.

6.0 Methodology and Objectives

- 6.1 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with the methodology and terminology set out in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition 2013 (*'The Purple Book'*) as recommended by the Landscape

Institute/Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment. The type of development was reviewed to identify the aspects likely to cause landscape and visual effects.

- 6.2 The objectives of the assessment is to appraise the overall sensitivity of the landscape context and the sensitivity of viewers and their ability to change, define the level of magnitude created by potential residential development and identify any mitigation.

7.0 Landscape Baseline/Impact

- 7.1 Establishing the landscape baseline identifies the elements that make up the landscape, the aesthetic and perceptual aspects of the landscape and if it has a distinct character. This has been established through a mix of desk study and field work to identify and record the character of the landscape and its elements, features and perceptual factors which contribute to it and the value attached to it.
- 7.2 The site lies within 2km of the AONB and within the Principle Farmlands Landscape Character Type. However, due to its location adjacent to the village boundary of Weston-Under-Penyard, the site itself is detracted by the established residential areas of Penyard Gardens to then south west and Hunsdon Manor Gardens to the north west. There is moderate tranquillity, but this is detracted by the existing adjacent development, road infrastructure and traffic.
- 7.3 There is no inter-visibility with the AONB due to the intervening undulating landscape and villagescape and the strong vegetated roadside boundaries. For these reasons and those discussed further on in this report, it can be concluded that, even though the site lies close to the AONB, it is actually of moderate sensitivity. Therefore, it has capacity to accommodate change and absorb the impacts of a residential development within its context due to the adjacent land uses and range of services and facilities within walking distance.
- 7.4 As the site lies adjacent to a villagescape which is predominately two storey residential, the landscape character can be described as village fringe. The individual

elements/receptors that collectively form the landscape character are identified as follows with photos also shown below:

1. Established post-war villagescape
2. Country lane with high hedges
3. Public footpaths
4. Mature bushy field boundary hedgerows and mature trees surrounding the paddocks
5. Existing watercourse/ditches and pond
6. Mature oak tree
7. Grass paddocks



Image of 1: Established villagescape



Image of 2: Country Lane



Image of 3: Public footpath



Image 4: Mature boundary vegetation



Image of 5. Watercourse



Image of 6 and 7: Mature Oak and Paddock

- 7.5 Using the methodology set out in GVLIA 3 for assessing landscape value and sensitivity, the results of the site survey and analysis has concluded that the overall value of landscape character can be as moderate with moderate sensitivity, largely due to the detracting urbanising elements in close proximity. In order to predict the potential landscape effects of the proposed change, the first step is to identify the individual elements that are likely to be affected by the scheme.
- 7.6 All of the individual landscape elements listed 1-7 above can be and should be retained. The grazed grass paddocks listed 7 is the only individual receptor that will change.
- 7.7 The following table summarises the significance of impact on each landscape receptor.

Receptor	Value	Sensitivity	Effect Magnitude	Significance of Impact
Post war residential villagescape	Low	Low	Low adverse	Insignificant
Country lane with high hedges	High	High	Low adverse	Insignificant
Public footpaths	High	High	Low adverse	Insignificant
Mature bushy field boundary hedgerows surrounding the	High	High	Low adverse	Insignificant

paddocks				
Mature Oak Tree	High	High	Low adverse	Insignificant
Existing watercourse ditch along part of the northern boundary	Medium	Medium	Low adverse	Beneficial
Mature Oak	High	High	Low adverse	Beneficial
Grazed grass paddocks.	Medium	Medium	Medium adverse	High adverse

Table 1: Impact Significance (Landscape)

7.8 Consequently the magnitude of landscape impact of the proposed scheme on the existing landscape sensitivity of the site can be assessed as **LOW SIGNIFICANT**.

7.9 It should be noted that some hedge removal will be required along the A40 at the proposed new access point to create the visibility splays required by county highways. We proposed to carefully lift the existing hedge and replant it along the back line of the new visibility splay to minimise the impact. This operation will be accompanied by a methodology statement and landscape management plan at reserved matters stage.

8.0 Visual Baseline/Impact

8.1 This section considers the likely potential visual impact of the proposed scheme on the site and its context. Visual impact assessment relates to “changes that arise in the composition of the available views as a result of changes to the landscape, to peoples’ (referred to as receptors) responses to the changes and to the overall effects with respect to visual amenity”. The visual baseline survey work involving a desk top assessment and detailed on site survey to define the likely extent of visibility both within and outside the site known as the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) (see Fig DNS-01.1).

8.2 Analysis of the initial ZTV and ZVI was used to identify potential viewpoints within 3000m and areas for field investigation based on the following criteria:

- Potential receptors in the baseline;
- Proximity to the site;
- High concentrations of viewers, such as settlements, local recreational facilities etc.;
- Views from designated areas, private properties, footpaths and other receptors.

General Visibility and Long Range Views

8.3 The visual baseline survey and analysis has determined the importance of the existing landform and the surrounding vegetation in limiting the extent of the visual envelope. Due to a combination of surrounding roads and country lanes with bushy high hedgerows, field boundary vegetation along the existing site boundaries, there appears to be limited significant long range and short range views into the site. The longer range views tend to be at a distance of approximately 1km from the higher slopes of the rising land to the south on Penyard Park and Pontshill across the A40 and the elevated farmland to the north. The church is visible from the M50, but due to intervening landform the site is not visible. The site is visible from only a small number of local public view points.

8.4 It should be noted that the visual assessment was carried out in the winter when visual penetration into the site was at its highest. This is likely to decrease during spring summer and early autumn as the vegetation surrounding the site is mainly deciduous and will have more foliage during these seasons.

8.5 The baseline identified a number of visual receptors; each view has been assessed and the sensitivity of the receptor analysed as follows (see Figure DNS 01.1):

Long Range Viewpoints

8.6 **Viewpoint 1:** Views from the public footpaths on elevated land to the south from Penyard Park (120m contour). This typical viewpoint is located approximately 1.0km to the south east. The typical view towards the site from these higher slopes can be described as an open view across the A40 valley. The site is visible filtered by existing vegetation in the medium distance on the built edge of the settlement of

Weston-Under-Penyard with parts of the paddock and boundary vegetation also visible. These slow moving receptors are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 1: Looking from the elevated land to the south west looking in a north east direction approximately 1.0 km from the site.

- 8.7 **Viewpoint 2:** Views from the public footpaths on elevated land to the south from Penyard Park (100m contour). This typical viewpoint is located approximately 0.75 km to the south east. The typical view towards the site from these higher slopes can be described as an open view across the A40 valley. The site is visible filtered by existing vegetation in the medium distance on the built edge of the settlement of Weston-Under-Penyard with parts of the paddock and boundary vegetation also visible. These slow moving receptors are considered to be of **high sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 2: Looking from the elevated land to the south west looking in a north east direction approximately 0.75 km from the site.

- 8.8 **Viewpoint 3:** Views from the public footpaths on elevated land to the south from Penyard Park (75m contour). This typical viewpoint is located approximately 0.5 km to the south east. The typical view towards the site can be described as an open view across the village with built development prominent in the foreground. The site is largely filtered by existing buildings and vegetation in the medium distance on the built edge of the settlement of Weston-Under-Penyrd, with the exception of the eastern boundary which is visible. These slow moving receptors are considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 3: Looking from the elevated land to the south west looking in a north east direction approximately 0.75 km from the site.

- 8.9 **Viewpoint 4:** Views from Bury Hill. This public road is located to the north east of the site. The view is dominated by the wooded Hillside of Penyard Park with the village nestled in the valley. The typical view can be described as a glimpse across an open view across the valley with Penyard Hill prominent in the background and the built edge of the village visible in the medium distance. These are slow moving receptors and are considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.



Photos taken from Viewpoint 4: Looking from Bury Hill in a south west direction.

- 8.10 **Viewpoint 5:** Public Footpath. The public footpath crosses the farmland to the north of the site. Penyard Hill is dominant in the background with the built form of the village visible in the medium distance. Parts of the site can be glimpsed through existing vegetation. These are slow moving receptors and are considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 5: Looking from Public Footpath in a south east direction towards the village boundary.

- 8.11 **Viewpoint 6:** View from A40 looking south east. This viewpoint is located to the west of the site from the village. This can be described as glimpses through gaps along the boundary of parts of the paddock across to the vegetation along the eastern. These are slow and fast moving receptors and are considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 6: Looking east along the A40.

- 8.12 **Viewpoint 7:** View from A40 looking south east. This viewpoint is located to the south of the site. This can be described as glimpses through gaps along the boundary of parts of the paddock. These are slow and fast moving receptors and are considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 7: Looking from A40 in a north direction across the site with the boundary vegetation visible in the foreground.

- 8.13 **Viewpoint 8:** View from A40 looking west. This viewpoint is located to the south east of the site. This can be described as glimpses through gaps along the boundary of parts of the paddock. These are slow and fast moving receptors and are considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 8: Looking from A40 in a north west direction across the site with the boundary vegetation visible in the foreground.

- 8.13 **Viewpoint 9:** View from Bury Hill looking west. This viewpoint is located along the country lane to the south east of the site. This can be described as a very brief glimpse through gaps along the boundary of parts of the paddock. These are slow and moving receptors and are considered to be of **medium sensitivity**.



Photo taken from Viewpoint 8: Looking from Bury Hill looking in a north west direction across the site with the boundary vegetation visible in the foreground.

- 8.14 **Private View:** There is likely to be views/glimpses of the site from the private residences along the north west boundary in Hunsdon Manor Gardens from rooms normally occupied in daylight hours. However loss of a private view is not a planning consideration. However amenity and overlooking is a planning matter and is addressed through standard separation distances.
- 8.15 The following table summarises the significance of impact on each visual receptor.

Receptor	Sensitivity	Change in View	Effect Magnitude			Significance of Impact
			Construction period	Completion	After 15 years	
View 1	High	Distance approximately 1000m. Long range views/glimpses by slow moving receptors of new buildings against a partial backdrop of visible built development.	Medium	Low	Low	Low
View 2	High	Distance approximately 750m. Long range views/glimpses by slow moving receptors of new buildings against a partial backdrop of visible built development.	Medium	Low	Low	Low
View 3	Medium	Distance approximately 500m. views/glimpses by slow moving receptors of new buildings against a foreground of visible built development.	Low	Low	Low	Low
View 4	Medium	Glimpses of new buildings against a backdrop of visible built development.	Medium	Low	Low	Low
View 5	Medium	Glimpses of new buildings against a backdrop of visible built development.	Low	Low	Low	Low

View 6	Medium	Glimpses of new buildings against a backdrop of open countryside.	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
View 7	Medium	Views of new buildings against a backdrop of open countryside.	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
View 8	Medium	Glimpses of new buildings against a backdrop of visible built development.	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium
View 9	Medium	Glimpses of new buildings against a backdrop of visible built development.	Low	Low	Low	Low

Table 2: Impact Significance (Visual)

- 8.15 Consequently, in balance the magnitude of visual impact of the proposed scheme on the existing visual sensitivity of receptors can be assessed as **LOW/MEDIUM SIGNIFICANT**.

9.0 Development Principles and Mitigation

- 9.1 As a result of the impacts identified from the both the landscape and visual assessments and in order to reduce the impacts further, the following mitigation measure are proposed concurrent with the underlying design principles all of which have been shown within the proposed illustrative site layout.

- A. All of the significant landscape elements including the boundary hedgerows, mature trees and the existing watercourse identified as part of this assessment have been retained and enhanced as part of the development proposals and will form a clear landscape structure absorbing the impacts of the proposals on the surrounding landscape.
- B. A new reinforced strip of native tree and hedge planting with Oak as the dominant species is proposed along the north east boundary to reinforce the existing neglected boundary and create a clear and defensible boundary with the open countryside.

- C. A new native hedgerow is proposed along the gaps in the south west boundary with the A40 to improve the image and structure of this untidy edge.
- D. New residential development is limited to a maximum height of two storeys to mirror the existing predominate building height within the adjacent villagescape.
- E. The existing hedge along the A40 within the proposed visibility splay will be carefully lifted and replanted along the back line of the proposed new visibility splay. A new scheme of native landscaping in the form of native tree and hedge planting with Oak as the dominant species has been shown along the new access road serving the new development to further soften the impacts on the surrounding countryside.
- F. Rear gardens have been placed backing onto the southern boundary with the existing adjacent to the existing residential areas.
- G. Lighting design within the new development should be minimised and designed to be sensitive to the landscape context.

9.2 The proposed scheme has been designed sympathetically and has been guided by the principles set out in the guidelines produced by the ANOB Management Plan by proposing the following:

- Ensuring that new built development is visually integrated with the rural landscape and does not interrupt the setting of the existing village.
- Ensuring that new development does not adversely affect settlement form.
- Proposes the planting of hedgerow trees with Oak as the dominant species.
- Proposes the strengthening of the rural pattern by planting up gappy hedgerows.
- Proposes the reinforcement of native broad-leaved woodland belts.

10.0 Visual Impact on the AONB

10.1 As part of the visual analysis above, an assessment of the visual impact of the proposed development on views to and from the AONB was undertaken.

10.2 The site lies within 2km of the AONB. The views have been considered in detail above, specifically the magnitude of the visual impact from the wider landscape beyond the village of Weston-Under-Penyard. The site was not found to be visible from the AONB.

10.3 Consequently the magnitude of visual impact of the proposed type of development on the existing visual sensitivity of receptors using the AONB can be assessed as **NEGLIGIBLE**.

11.0 Assessment of Cumulative Effects

11.1 There doesn't appear to be any other planned developments of any significance proposed within close proximity of the site or indeed anywhere close to the village of Weston-Under-Penyard with the exception of a current planning application for a single dwelling along School Lane. Consequently, there are no significant cumulative effects identified for the development proposals.

12.0 Summary

12.1 **Landscape** – A scheme of residential development could offer long term protection and enhancement for the important landscape elements and receptors that currently exist within this village fringe landscape. Although the proposals will result in the loss of open paddock, all of the other landscape receptors will be retained. A number of mitigation measures have been identified to lessen the impacts of the scheme. Consequently, it can be concluded that the magnitude of landscape impact of the type of development proposed on the existing landscape sensitivity of the site can be assessed as **LOW SIGNIFICANT**.

- 12.2 **Visual** - Due to a combination of topography and boundary vegetation, the site is largely visually concealed to local receptors. As a result of careful analysis of existing public vantage points both locally and Penyard Hill, it is concluded that the magnitude of visual impact of the type of development proposed on the existing visual sensitivity of receptors can be assessed as **LOW SIGNIFICANT**.
- 12.3 Consequently, the illustrative layout has been designed to minimise the landscape and visual impact of the development on the surrounding landscape context and its receptors. All of the existing hedgerows and trees will be retained and enhanced by the mitigation planting proposals. Due to its position adjacent to the village boundary and the influence of adjacent development, the site is capable of absorbing change. The illustrative layout highlights a landscape led design to the site, ensuring that key biodiversity aspects are maintained and enhanced. The conclusion of this assessment is that the proposals on balance would not result in any significant landscape or visual impact and would not outweigh the benefit of providing additional new housing in a sustainable location.

APPENDIX 1: DRAWINGS



Viewpoint 5: From PROW looking south west



Viewpoint 1: From Penyard Hill looking north east



Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) (open views)
Isolated filtered views and glimpse views through trees, hedgerows
and from private properties may be possible outside the ZVI



Site Boundary

Location for Mitigation Planting

Important Boundary Vegetation to be Retained

Public Viewpoints

dns: planning|design

email: hd@dns-planning.co.uk 01452 413726

**Land to the North East of Weston
Under Penyard Herefordshire**

Landscape and Visual Survey

Scale
as shown

Date
21.12.14

Number
DNS 01:1

Revision
none