

Appendix 6B

Landscape Baseline Descriptions and Sensitivity Assessments

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1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix sets out the baseline descriptions and landscape sensitivity assessments for the Local Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) and LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas (VSAA) which have been scoped into the LVIA as described in **Chapter 6: LVIA** of the ES.
- 1.1.2 The appendix is structured as follows:
- Section 1.2: Local Landscape Character Areas Baseline Descriptions and Sensitivity Assessments; and
 - Section 1.3: LANDMAP VSAA Baseline Descriptions and Sensitivity Assessments.
- 1.1.3 The Appendices are to be read in conjunction with the following Figures
- Figure 6.3: Local Landscape Character Plan
 - Figure 6.4: Visual and Sensory Aspect Areas
 - Figure 6.5: Landscape Designations Plan

1.2 Local Landscape Character areas

Baseline Descriptions

- 1.2.1 The baseline descriptions for the Local Landscape Character Areas are set out in **Table 6B.1** below

Table 6B-1 - Local Landscape Character Descriptions

LCA 1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Summary Description | Location: This LCA is located along the north-western fringes of the County Borough, to the west of Maesteg. The extents of the LCA within the Study Area are shown on Figure 6.3 . |
| Viewpoint 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6 | <p>Key Characteristics:</p> <p><i>Topography, geology and drainage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly undulating upland landscape with a series of north-east facing slopes and hill summits ranging from 120 to 365 metres AOD. • Distinctive topography influenced by the heavily dissected Upper Coal Measures plateau greatly modified by the effects of glaciation. • Landscape crossed by a number of fast-flowing springs and streams, flowing into the Llynfi Valley below. <p><i>Woodland cover</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dense coniferous forestry plantations on some slopes and hill summits (e.g. Garn Wen and Waun Lluest-wen) with linear broadleaved woodlands found along valley sides. • Dark, straight plantation edges providing a stark contrast to the adjacent muted grasslands on rounded slopes. <p><i>Agricultural land use and field patterns</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral landscape with significant tracts of rough sheep and pony grazing on higher ground (particularly in the north). • A strong pattern of irregular fields enclosed by hedgerows, tree belts and stone walls. • Elevated land around Mynydd Ty-talwyn including large, regular semi-improved pastures divided by fencing. |

LCA 1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry

Semi-natural habitats

- Valued habitats including heathland, blanket bog, acid grassland, fen and marsh (with significant areas defined as SINC's).
- Broadleaved semi-natural woodland on slopes and valleys, and nationally important marshy grassland (supporting marsh fritillaries) at Cwm Risca Meadow SSSI.
- Patches of bracken, gorse and rush pasture found throughout.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Land west of Llangynwyd within the Margam Mountain Landscape of Special Historic Interest, with scheduled archaeological features including Y Bwlwarcu hillfort and the medieval Llangynwyd Castle.
- Cluster of nationally important medieval house platforms and settlement remains around Mynydd Ty Talwyn.

Settlement and road pattern

- Nucleated hill-top village of Llangynwyd (a Conservation Area), with prominent 15th century square church tower forming a local landmark.
- Farmsteads and small groups of dwellings thinly dispersed elsewhere.
- A small number of minor roads, tracks and footpaths cross through the landscape. The Ogwr Ridgeway Walk passes through the southern part of the LCA, and areas of higher ground are open access land.

Views and perceptual qualities

- A strongly rural and tranquil landscape despite the close proximity of nearby development at Maesteg.
- Tranquil qualities eroded by the presence of pylon lines, telecommunications masts and urban fringe land uses close to Maesteg, including a golf course.
- Southern ridgelines affording panoramic views across the County Borough, including wind farm developments on distant skylines.
- Intervisibility with Maesteg a strong feature of the northern half of the LCA.

LCA 3: Llynfi & Garw Uplands and Forestry

Summary Description

Location: This LCA comprises an exposed upland landscape in the north of the County Borough, sitting to the east of Maesteg. The LCA is located to the east of the Project at an elevated level with views over the valley and Maesteg Settlement. The extents of the LCA within the Study area are shown on Figure 6.3.

Viewpoint 2

Key Characteristics:

Topography, geology and drainage

- Strongly rolling upland landscape with steep slopes and rounded hill summits, reaching a maximum of 556 metres AOD at Mynydd Caerau.
- High land underlain by Upper Coal Measures with complex dip characteristics, forming distinctive rounded hill summits. Upper slopes draining into the Llynfi Valley comprise frequently bedded Middle Coal Measures, with some deposits of glacial boulder clay.
- Functions as a water catchment for the adjacent Llynfi and Garw valleys, with many fast-flowing tributaries and waterfalls carving through the landscape to meet the rivers below.

Woodland cover

- Extensive tracts of mature larch and Norway spruce forestry on hill summits and slopes (including Garw Forest), forming prominent geometric blocks.

LCA 3: Llynfi & Garw Uplands and Forestry

- Bands of semi-natural broadleaved woodland along streams (oak, ash and birch dominated) and field boundaries, with windsculpted, stunted oaks featuring on lower slopes.

Agricultural land use and field patterns

- Apart from forestry, the main land use is rough moorland sheep grazing, with enclosed semi-improved pastures on lower slopes with areas of purple moor grass/ rush pasture.
- Large enclosures marked by fencing or lines of wind-sculpted trees.

Semi-natural habitats

- Valued habitats include patches of broadleaved semi-natural woodland, marshy grassland, bog, scrub, bracken, acid grassland and heathland, with a number of locally designated SINC.

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- Disused spoil tips, mines and quarries on hillsides are evidence of the area's industrial past.
- Prehistoric round cairns crown hill summits, including a nationally important cluster on Mynydd Caerau and further examples within Garw Forest. The remains of a medieval platform house are also found on Garth Hill.

Settlement and road pattern

- Very sparse settlement limited to a handful of scattered farmsteads on lower slopes.
- The town of Maesteg lies to the west of the LCA within the Llynfi Valley, with the only road access into the landscape from the town terminating at the entrance to a former coal mining area below the Garw Forest.
- A large proportion of the forest is open access land, accessible by forestry access tracks and public footpaths/bridleways. There is also a significant area of open access land at Mynydd Bach.

Views and perceptual qualities

- A strong sense of remoteness and bleakness, particularly in adverse weather conditions.
- Expansive, panoramic views across the county borough and beyond (Brecon Beacons to the north, Bristol Channel and Somerset to the south).
- Lower slopes have strong visual connections with the adjacent Llynfi and Garw valleys and their associated settlements.

LCA 7: Mynydd Margam

Summary Description

Location: This LCA area is a large block of unenclosed upland, much of which is under modern forestry. It is situated on the southwest fringe of the Glamorgan Blaenau that visually dominates the coastal plain. The boundary of the area is defined by the extent of enclosure into this upland and to the east by the County Borough boundary. A small section of the proposed southern OHL extends into this LCA. The extents of the LCA within the Study area are shown on **Figure 6.3**.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

- The woodland, consist of significant coniferous plantation cover. Composition of the woodland is predominantly spruce, but with significant larch cover and occasionally pine, providing visual variety.
- Its elevation means the area provides the skyline to views from the south and west. Within the forest there is a tranquil quality, and its extent allows a sense of

LCA 7: Mynydd Margam

isolation to develop. This is enhanced by the absence of development and only minimal access along forestry tracks.

- The woodland creates an abrupt edge against open ground to the south and north but enhances the upland character of adjacent valleys.

Key Characteristics:

- Large expanse of coniferous woodland across high ground of Mynydd Margam and forming side of Cwm Dyffryn.
- Limited access to area develops sense of isolation.
- Woodland creates an abrupt edge against open ground.
- Concentration of Iron Age forts, forming chain across the southern fringe of the mountain.
- Designated in Register of Landscapes of Historic Interest in Wales.
- Area untrammelled by industrial exploitation.

LCA 13: Foel Trawsant

Summary Description

Location: This area of upland grazing ranges from approximately 220m AOD to 371m AOD at the summit of Foel Trawsant. It is bounded to the east by the County Borough boundary, to the south by the woodland of Mynydd Penhrydd and to the north by the Afan Valley. A section of the proposed northern OHL extends into this LCA. The extents of the LCA within the Study area are shown on **Figure 6.3**.

Visual and Sensory Characteristics

- This upland grazed landscape has simple cover of unenclosed sheep grazed coarse grass and continues beyond the assessment area to the east. It is bounded by woodland creating a strong edge and preventing views into this area from the surrounding valleys. Minor valleys holding minor watercourses, as well as house platforms on higher ground add visual interest to an area, which generally feels bleak and exposed.
- There are no dwellings or structural development present and the only public access is via a footpath and bridleway. Significant tracts of land surrounding access routes have been provisionally designated open county.

Key Characteristics:

- An area of unenclosed upland grazing ranges from approximately 220m AOD to 371m AOD.
- Simple grass cover which extends beyond the county boundary.
- Upland habitats including upland heath and acid flushes.
- Bleak and exposed character.

Local Landscape Character Area Sensitivity Assessment

- 1.2.2 The sensitivity assessment for the Local Landscape Character Areas are set out in **Table 6B.2** below

Table 6B-2 - Local Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

| LCA 1: Llangynwyd Rolling Uplands and Forestry | |
|---|--|
| Sensitivity (Viewpoints 1, 3, 4, 5 & 6) | <p>Foel y Dyffryn SLA falls entirely within the northern part of the LCA and the southern half of the LCA falls with the Western Uplands SLA. There is High scenic quality and character within the LCA. The overall value is judged to be <i>High</i>.</p> <p>The rural valley landscape is of medium-large scale with undulating topography and views towards hill summits, which are indicators of a landscape with high susceptibility. However, the presence of the urban fringe of Maesteg towards the northern part of the LCA along with views towards built development such as windfarms, pylon lines and telecommunication decrease the overall susceptibility. In areas away from the settlements and roads there is an increased level of tranquillity. The susceptibility is therefore judged to be <i>Medium</i>.</p> <p>In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be High - Medium Sensitivity.</p> |
| LCA 3: Llynfi & Garw Uplands and Forestry | |
| Sensitivity (Viewpoint 2) | <p>There are no SLA's located within this LCA. The landscape and scenic quality is considered to be moderate, the overall value is therefore judged to be <i>Medium</i>.</p> <p>The remote upland character with its expansive panoramic views and sparse settlement indicates a landscape of high susceptibility. The LCA bounds the settlement of Maesteg to the west which decreases the tranquillity along this urban fringe. The Project is located within an adjacent LCA and therefore there would be no direct impacts upon this LCA. The overall susceptibility is judged to be <i>Medium</i>.</p> <p>In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be Medium Sensitivity</p> |
| LCA 7: Mynydd Margam | |
| Sensitivity | <p>Margam SLA is located within this LCA. Margam Country Park is also located within this LCA (although outwith of the ZTV). There is moderate scenic quality within the LCA. The overall value is judged to be <i>Medium</i>.</p> <p>This LCA contains large expanses of coniferous forestry which creates a sense of enclosure within the LCA which are indicators of low susceptibility. The coniferous forestry is also a lower value landcover which is easy to replace. There is a sense of remoteness and tranquillity within the forest which indicates a high susceptibility. The overall susceptibility is judged to be <i>Medium</i></p> <p>In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be Medium Sensitivity</p> |

LCA 13: Foel Trawsnant

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Sensitivity | <p>Foel Trawsnant SLA covers all of this LCA area. There is moderate scenic quality within the LCA the overall value is therefore judged to be <i>Medium</i>.</p> <p>The rural upland character containing no dwellings and access limited to PRoWs are indicators of a landscape of high susceptibility. The landcover comprising rough grass are indicators of a landscape of lower susceptibility. The overall susceptibility is judged to be <i>Medium</i>.</p> <p>In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be Medium Sensitivity</p> |
|--------------------|---|

1.3 LANDMAP VSAA Baseline Descriptions

Baseline Descriptions

1.3.1 The baseline descriptions for the LANDMAP VSAA are set out in **Table 6B.3** below

Table 6B-3 - LANDMAP VSAA Descriptions

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area: CYNONVS473 – Mynydd baedan (Ref 18 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Summary Description | <p>Location: This Visual and Sensory area is referenced as No 18 on Figure 6.4. A section of the proposed northern OHL, part of the underground section (except where it enters into Maesteg) and the majority of the lower section of the proposed southern OHL lies within this VSAA.</p> |
| Viewpoints 1, 3, 4 & 5 | <p>LANDMAP Summary Description: Northeastern facing slopes, ranging from 120m to 350mAOD, of rough grazing with woodland blocks/forestry providing both structure and dominant mosaic pattern. strong upland character reinforced by northeasterly views of Brecon Beacons. Views out down to urban area and within to scattered farmsteads take edge off what is essentially a wild /upland feel with some views over ridge south to sea adding to sense of place and experience of altitude/elevation.</p> |

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area: NPTVS358 – Foel Trawsnant (Ref 3 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Summary Description | <p>Location: This Visual and Sensory area is referenced as No 3 on Figure 6.4. A section of the proposed northern OHL extends into this VSAA.</p> |
| | <p>LANDMAP Summary Description: Upland grazing ranging from approximately 220m AOD to 271m AOD, with simple grass cover. The area is edged by woodland creating a strong edge and preventing views into this area from the surrounding valleys. The area contains minor valleys holding minor watercourses, as well as house platforms on higher ground. The area feels exposed and bleak. There are no settlements or dwellings and access is via foot and bridle paths. The area continues beyond the assessment area to the east.</p> |

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area: NPTVS927 – Mynydd Margam (Ref 14 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Summary Description | <p>Location: This Visual and Sensory area is referenced as No 14 on Figure 6.4. A small section of the proposed southern OHL extends into this VSAA</p> <p>LANDMAP Summary Description: Area of upland coniferous woodland, rising from approximately 100m AOD in Cwm Dyffryn to approximately 350m AOD, covering much of the upland between the coastal plain and Cwm Dyffryn, in to which it runs. The cover is predominantly managed plantation with a mix of spruce (dominant) and larch with some pine. Its elevation means the area provides the skyline to views from the west. The woodland provides an abrupt edge against open ground to south and north.</p> |
|----------------------------|--|

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area: CYNONVS351 – Maesteg (Ref 17 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Summary Description | <p>Location: This Visual and Sensory area is referenced as No 17 on Figure 6.4. The VSAA covers the settlement of Maesteg. The underground section of the route passes through a small area of the town to the west (Kings Terrace, Garwen Road, Heol Ty Gwyn)</p> <p>LANDMAP Summary Description: Small town with mix of modern and traditional buildings in an upper valley setting between approximately 100m and 200mAOD, the elevation and close proximity of upland imparting a slight upland sense of place to the northern area of the town. The town centre dominated by traffic, variable housing quality on outskirts, and modern developments. Some good views to upper valley sides and beyond across urban area in valley floor, particularly from the higher ground in the south looking north.</p> |
|----------------------------|---|

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area: CYNONVS731 – Conifer to west of study area (Ref 19 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Summary Description | <p>Location: This Visual and Sensory area is referenced as No 19 (2 separate areas) on Figure 6.4. Two sections of the proposed underground route in the north and south partially bound the VSAA along its eastern edge.</p> <p>LANDMAP Summary Description: Upland landscape dominated by coniferous forest that form small parts of much larger coniferous plantations within adjacent Neath/Port Talbot study area. Limited views out to upland areas and views to Maesteg in the valley below.</p> |
|----------------------------|--|

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area: CYNONVS811 – Garth Hill (Ref 20 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Summary Description | <p>Location: This Visual and Sensory area is referenced as No 20 on Figure 6.4. The VSAA is located to the east of the Project at an elevated level with views over the valley.</p> |
| Viewpoint 2 | <p>LANDMAP Summary Description: Easterly facing slopes (reaching from approximately 150m to 350m AOD) of relatively broad valley, - aspect brings views across urban area on valley floor- sharp boundary of urban/rural interface. upland feel generated through elevation and rough grazing on softly rounded slopes with scattered farmsteads. Conifer</p> |

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area: CYNONVS811 – Garth Hill (Ref 20 - Figure 6.4)

clad uplands of Mynydd Morgan dominates views. Lower slopes are reclaimed/regenerated, allocated for development. Recent school conspicuous at edge of Maesteg.

LANDMAP VSAA Sensitivity Assessment

1.3.2 The sensitivity assessment for the LANDMAP VSAA are set out in **Table 6B.4** below

Table 6B-4 - LANDMAP VSAA Sensitivity Assessment

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - CYNONVS473 – Mynydd baedan (Ref 18 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Sensitivity | Value (Q26): High Scenic quality (Q46): High Character (Q48): Moderate Overall Evaluation (Q50): High |
| Viewpoints 1, 3, 4 & 5 | <p>Relevant Landscape Designations – The VSAA is located within Foel y Dyffryn SLA (The northern OHL is located within this SLA) and Western Uplands SLA (The southern OHL is located within this SLA). The area contains a number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments including the Bwlwarcau hillfort which is located to the west of the proposed southern OHL. The historic associations add value to the Site character.</p> <p>The overall value is judged to be <i>High</i></p> <p>This is a large-scale landscape situated in a valley with undulating topography indicating a landscape of Medium susceptibility. The landscape pattern comprises a mosaic field pattern with scattered rural farm which would result in a High susceptibility. There is infrequent movement within the character area resulting in a remote character however views out towards the settlement of Maesteg reduces the visual tranquillity indicating a medium susceptibility. There are views out towards surrounding hillsides increasing the susceptibility to High. The overall susceptibility is judged to be <i>High-Medium</i>.</p> <p>In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be High-Medium Sensitivity</p> |

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - NPTVS358 – Foel Trawsnant (Ref 3 - Figure 6.4)

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| Sensitivity | Value (Q26): Moderate Scenic quality (Q46): Moderate Character (Q48): Moderate Overall Evaluation (Q50): Moderate |
| | <p>Relevant Landscape Designations – The VSAA is located within Foel Trawsnant SLA.</p> <p>The overall value is judged to be <i>Medium</i>.</p> <p>The scale of the landscape is large with rolling/ undulating topography and open field pattern indicating a low-medium susceptibility. The lack of dwellings, occasional</p> |

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - NPTVS358 – Foel Trawsnant (Ref 3 - Figure 6.4)

movement and exposed wild perceptual qualities indicate a high susceptibility. The overall susceptibility is judged to be *Medium*.

In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be **Medium Sensitivity**

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - NPTVS927 – Mynydd Margam (Ref 14 - Figure 6.4)

Sensitivity Value (Q26): Moderate
Scenic quality (Q46): Moderate
Character (Q48): Moderate
Overall Evaluation (Q50): Moderate

Relevant Landscape Designations – Margam SLA is located within this VSAA. The overall value is judged to be *Medium*

The scale of the landscape is large occupying a plateau indicating a low susceptibility. The landcover is predominantly coniferous woodland indicating a low-medium susceptibility. There is a sense of remoteness and tranquillity within the forest which indicates a high susceptibility. The overall susceptibility is judged to be *Medium-Low*.

In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be **Medium-Low Sensitivity**

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - CYNONVS351 – Maesteg (Ref 17 - Figure 6.4)

Sensitivity Value (Q26): Low
Scenic quality (Q46): Moderate
Character (Q48): Low
Overall Evaluation (Q50): Low

Relevant Landscape Designations – No SLA located within this VSAA. The overall value is judged to be *Low*

The settlement is of medium scale located within a valley indicating a medium susceptibility. The movement is constant with low tranquilly and contains generally inappropriate development indicating a low susceptibility. The overall susceptibility is judged to be *Low- Medium*.

In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be **Low - Medium Sensitivity**

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - CYNONVS731 – Conifer to west of study area (Ref 19 - Figure 6.4)

Sensitivity Value (Q26): Moderate
Scenic quality (Q46): Moderate

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - CYNONVS731 – Conifer to west of study area (Ref 19 - Figure 6.4)

Character (Q48): Moderate
Overall Evaluation (Q50): Moderate

Relevant Landscape Designations – There are no SLA's located within this VSAA.
The overall value is judged to be *Medium*.

The scale of the landscape is large with set within a valley with the landcover predominantly coniferous woodland indicating low-medium susceptibility. There is a sense of remoteness and tranquillity within the forest indicating in a high-medium susceptibility. The overall susceptibility is judged to be *Medium-Low*.

In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be **Medium – Low Sensitivity**

Visual and Sensory Aspect Area - CYNONVS811 – Garth Hill (Ref 20 - Figure 6.4)

Sensitivity
(Viewpoint 2)
Value (Q26): Moderate
Scenic quality (Q46): Moderate
Character (Q48): Moderate
Overall Evaluation (Q50): Moderate

Relevant Landscape Designations – There are no SLA's located within this VSAA.
The overall value is judged to be *Medium*

This is a large-scale upland landscape with an open land pattern indicating a low-medium susceptibility. There is infrequent movement within the character area resulting in a remote character however views out towards the settlement of Maesteg and the school at the edge of the settlement reduces the visual tranquillity indicating a medium susceptibility. There are also views out towards surrounding hillsides containing coniferous plantations. The overall susceptibility is judged to be *Medium*.

In combination of value and susceptibility this landscape receptor is judged to be **Medium Sensitivity**