



Canal and River Trust

Wern Nature Reserve, Coppice Lane

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

July 2024

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Approved/Date
-	Draft	CEP / 03.08.23	KAD / 03.08.23
-	Draft2	CEP / 21.09.23	KAD / 21.09.23
-	Planning	RJC / 09.05.24	CEP / 09.05.24
-	First Issue	RJC / 01.07.24	CEP / 01.07.24

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out for Wern Reserve by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). The purpose of this LVA study is to provide an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The landscape and visual effects have been considered in relation to the proposals detailed in the planning application and Green Infrastructure Statement.
- 1.2 FPCR is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy established over 60 years, with expertise in architecture, landscape, ecology, arboriculture, urban design, masterplanning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence on landscape and visual issues at Public and Local Plan Inquiries.

Site Location

- 1.3 Figures 1 and 2 show the location and context of the site. The site is located to the south of Wern and is situated between Coppice Lane and the Montgomery Canal to the west of the A483.

Proposed Development

- 1.4 The proposed development is for the creation of a new nature reserve area comprising a large pond, which would comprise extensive new open water and wetland and grassland habitats, along with associated infrastructure including water inlet and outlet structures to and from the Montgomery Canal. It is hoped that a proportion of the material extracted to create the pond would be re-used on site to provide connected bunded habitat in the western field parcel.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This LVA has been prepared based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013. The assessment of Landscape Value also takes account of guidance in Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02-21 “Assessing landscape value outside national designations”.

2.2 In summary, the GLVIA3 states:

“Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people’s views and visual amenity.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 1.1.)

2.3 There are two components of LVIA:

- *“Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
- *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people.”* (GLVIA3 paragraph 2.21.)

2.4 The GLVIA3 states:

“LVIA can be carried out either as part of a broader EIA, or as a standalone ‘appraisal’ of the likely landscape and visual effects of a proposed development...”

- *As a standalone ‘appraisal’ the process is informal and there is more flexibility, but the essence of the approach – specifying the nature of the proposed change or development; describing the existing landscape and the views and visual amenity of the area that may be affected; predicting the effects, although not their likely significance; and considering how those effects might be mitigated – still applies.”* (GLVIA paragraph 3.2)

2.5 The components of this report include: baseline studies; description and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme; and identification and description of likely effects arising from the proposed development.

2.6 In terms of baseline studies, the assessment provides an understanding of the landscape that may be affected, its constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the visual baseline, this includes an understanding of the area in which the development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

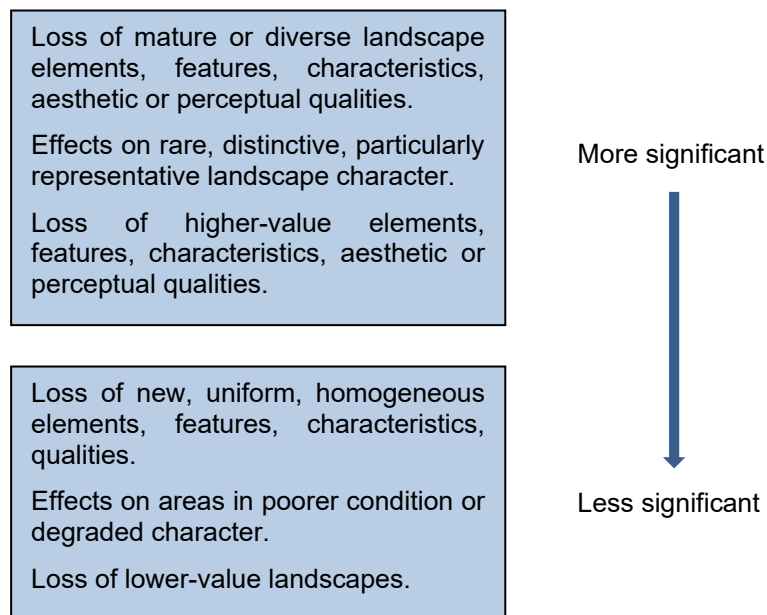
2.7 GLVIA3 states that *“An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource”* (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1).

2.8 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing published Landscape Character Assessments and by a description of the site and its context.

2.9 A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;

- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
 - Combined effects of these changes.
- 2.10 The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. The value of the existing landscape is also considered.
- 2.11 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale of change, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or addition of new elements. Geographical extent is considered by reference to the extent of the area over which there will be a change. Duration is considered for the landscape effects, with short term effects being defined as those lasting less than 5 years, medium term effects lasting between 5 and 10 years and long-term effects being defined as anything over 10 years in duration.
- 2.12 The level of effect is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of effect on the landscape. Final conclusions on the overall landscape effects are drawn from the assessment components described. This appraisal describes the nature of the landscape effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).
- 2.13 GLVIA3 sets out some guidance on the underlying principles, which are used in this appraisal. This includes Figure 5.10, Scale of significance. Whilst this scheme is not EIA development, and judgements on significance are not therefore required, the Figure does provide useful guidance on reaching an overall judgement on the level of effects. This is repeated below (note this includes the correction of a typo, from the published document).



- 2.14 The criteria used in the appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Assessment of Visual Effects

- 2.15 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. This appraisal describes the nature of the visual effects and, whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1 Winter) and longer term (year 15 Summer).
- 2.16 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/ visibility mapping. This has been done by manual methods using map study and field evaluation. A series of viewpoints are included within the assessment that are representative of views towards the site from surrounding visual receptors. Other views of the site are included where it supports the description and understanding of the site's landscape and visual characteristics.
- 2.17 The views also typically represent what can be seen from a variety of distances from the development and different viewing experiences.
- 2.18 It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. For each affected viewpoint, the assessment considers both the susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views.

“The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:

- *Residents at home;*
- *People, whether residents or visitors, who are engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape and on particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets, or to other attractions, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*
Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of moderate susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high.” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.33.)

“Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:

- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
 - *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings, and where the setting is not important to the quality of working life (although there may on occasion be cases where views are an important contributor to the setting and to the quality of working life).”* (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.34.)
- 2.19 Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.
- 2.20 In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:
- *“The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;*

- *The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture;*
 - *The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses” (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.39).*
- 2.21 The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:
- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
 - The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
 - The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.
- 2.22 As with landscape effects, the duration of the effect could be short to long term or permanent and the same definitions apply.
- 2.23 GLVIA3 states that there are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and context and with the type of proposal, but the following points should be noted;
- *Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant.*
 - *Effects on people at recognised and important viewpoints or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant.*
 - *Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view. (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.44)*
- 2.24 The criteria used in this appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Overall Landscape and Visual Effects

- 2.25 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.
- 2.26 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following terms have been used for this appraisal:
- **Major**
 - **Moderate**
 - **Minor**
 - **Negligible**
- 2.27 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 11 (February 2021)

- 2.28 PPWⁱ sets out the Welsh Government's economic, social and environmental planning policy and is supported by a series of Technical Advice Notes (TANS). primary objective of the PPW is to ensure that the planning system contributes towards the delivery of sustainable development and improves the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales.
- 2.29 PPW sets out key planning principles for achieving the right development in the right place:
- *“Growing our economy in a sustainable manner;*
 - *Making best use of resources;*
 - *Facilitating accessible and healthy environments;*
 - *Creating and sustaining communities;*
 - *Maximising environmental protection and limiting environmental impact.”*
- 2.30 In relation to landscape, the PPW states that:

“All the landscapes of Wales are valued for their intrinsic contribution to a sense of place, and local authorities should protect and enhance their special characteristics, whilst paying due regard to the social, economic, environmental and cultural benefits they provide, and to their role in creating valued places. Considering landscape at the outset of formulating strategies and policies in development plans and when proposing development is key to sustaining and enhancing their special qualities and delivering the maximum well-being benefits for present and future generations as well as helping to deliver an effective and integrated approach to natural resource management over the long term. Collaboration and engagement with adjacent planning authorities, Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Cadw and the third sector will be necessary to draw on a wide range of expertise and evidence.”

Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Technical Advice Notes (TAN)

- 2.31 PPW Technical advice notes include (TAN) 12 – Design (March 2016), which provides advice on the promotion of sustainability through good design and sets out key objectives to achieve this.

Local Planning Policy

Powys Local Development Plan (2011 – 2016) – Adopted April 2018

- 2.32 The Local Development Plan (LDP) was prepared by Powys County Council. The specific aims of the LDP with regards to landscape are set out in Objective 13 which is *‘To protect, preserve and/or enhance the distinctive landscapes of Powys and adjoining areas, including protected landscapes’*. To achieve this objective, the plan contains strategic and development management policies. The following ‘saved’ policies are of relevance to landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:
- *Strategic Policy SP7 (Safeguarding of Strategic Resources and Assets)*
 - *Development Management Policy DM2 (The Natural Environment)*
 - *Development Management Policy DM4 (Landscape)*

- *Development Management Policy DM13 (Design and Resources)*
- *Planning for Tourism Policy TD3 (Montgomery Canal and Associated Development)*

2.33 Policy TD3 states that “*development proposals that support the restoration of the Montgomery Canal and preserve and enhance the role of the canal as a multifunctional resource, including off-line nature reserves and other appropriate canal-related development, will be supported. Proposals for development that would adversely affect the canal’s scientific and conservation designations or prejudice its sensitive restoration will be opposed.*”

Landscape Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) Adopted April 2019

2.34 This guidance supplements the landscape related policies of the Powys Local Development Plan (LDP) (2011-2026). The SPG provides information and guidance on how, through implementation of the policies in the LDP, development proposals should ensure that the landscape is appropriately considered and goes on to state that:

“All development proposals within or outside of settlements need to be designed to complement and/or enhance the surrounding area which includes the landscape or townscape. All such proposals must avoid any unacceptable adverse effects on the valued characteristics and qualities of the Powys landscape and should contribute towards the preservation of local distinctiveness and sense of place to comply with Policies SP7, DM4 and DM13.”

Policy Summary

2.35 The proposals for this Site provide opportunities to address landscape related policies of the Local Plan, both strategic and development management, as well as the Landscape Supplementary Planning Guidance.

3.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Character

National Character

- 3.1 At a national level Wales has been divided into 48 broad scale National Landscape Character Areas (NLCAs). These are broad areas with regionally distinct natural, cultural and perceptual characteristics. At this very broad landscape scale, the site lies within National Landscape Character Area (NLCA) 17 'Montgomeryshire Hills and Vales'. This NLCA stretches from Aberhafesp in the south to Llansilin in the north and is described as follows:

"This very rural hill and valley landscape occupies the lower sections of the rivers Tanat, Vyrnwy, Banwy, Cain and Rhiw... There are neatly managed mixed fields in the richer valley bottoms and grazing on higher slopes and moorlands. There is much evidence of defence, from the Iron Age hillforts and Roman forts and fortlets, to the intensive proliferation of mottes and stone castles in the border landscapes... a very rural area, quiet in most parts, with very little large scale modern development. There are numerous lanes and paths that reveal streams, dingles, cottages and open Montgomeryshire Hills and Vales views. Often there are a wide variety of scenes of interest in short succession, providing a strong sense of place, but with repeating variations continuing across a wide area."

- 3.2 Whilst the NLCA description helps to set the context and has informed the baseline review, it is not considered necessary to consider landscape effects of the proposed scheme at this broad landscape scale given the nature and scale of the proposals.

Local Character

Landscape Character Assessment for the Powys Local Development Plan (LDP) Area (2022)

- 3.3 This study identifies 61 distinct Landscape Character Areas (LCA) and sets out descriptions and guidelines for each one. The site is covered by two LCAs being located at the boundary between LCA 8 'Severn Farmlands' and LCA 10 'Guilsfield'

LCA 8 'Severn Farmlands'

- 3.4 LCA 8 is described as follows:

"An extensive open valley landscape along the Severn and Vyrnwy rivers and their tributaries. The LCA is low-lying, with a wide floodplain which lies at around 60m AOD at its lowest point ... in the west there is a wide, well-developed floodplain and some minor development of terraces; and the south-east is characterised by a broad depositional basin, dominated by lacustrine deposits, with areas of alluvium and very small areas of peat... the Montgomery Canal, which runs broadly parallel to the River Severn between Llanmynech and Aberbechan is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) / Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its aquatic emergent and marginal plant communities."

- 3.5 Key Characteristics identified for LCA 8 include:

- *"Extensive, open and low-lying valley of the River Severn and River Vyrnwy and their tributaries;*

- *The valleys have a distinctive wide floodplain, narrowing in the south-west with steep valley sides;*
- *Hedgerows and mixed broadleaved woodland, much of ancient semi-natural origin, contributes to a strong landscape structure;*
- *Wooded parkland landscapes occupy parts of the floodplain, including at Lymore Park, Vaynor Park and Bryngwyn;*
- *Sense of place resulting from the broad, flat farmed floodplain, enclosing wooded valley sides (in neighbouring LCAs) and historic settlements;*
- *Wide views across the valley are available although outward views from the LCA are contained by the enclosing wooded valley sides in neighbouring LCAs including the Long Mountain / Breidden Hills LCA to the south-east;*
- *Occasional elevated and expansive views across the Severn Valley including from Llanmynech Hill and Montgomery Castle.”*

3.6 Under Key Landscape Qualities and Sensitivities, LCA 8 identifies ‘*The Montgomery Canal, its numerous listed structures and recreational opportunities*’. LCA 8 also identifies “*the restoration of the Montgomery Canal and opportunities associated with it, such as improving visitor facilities*” as a future force for change.

3.7 Development Management Guidelines for LCA 8 include “*protect the setting of the Montgomery Canal, seek opportunities to further enhance access to and enjoyment of the canal and open up / enhance views of the canal.*”

3.8 LCA 10 is described as follows:

“The Guilsfield Landscape Character Area (LCA) is a rolling landscape of hills and valleys, located to the north-west of Welshpool, between the lower-lying Severn Farmland to the north, east and south, Banwy Valley to the west and Tregynon to the south-west.”

3.9 Key Characteristics identified for LCA 10 include:

- *“Rolling hills with rounded tops rising to over 350m in the south, generally forming ridges that are oriented east-west and appear to radiate out from the Powis Castle area in the south-east;*
- *Ridges are separated by valleys or cwms, with streams that are tributaries of the River Vyrnwy to the north-west and River Severn to the south-east;*
- *Rolling hills with rounded tops rising to over 350m in the south, generally forming ridges that are oriented east-west and appear to radiate out from the Powis Castle area in the south-east;*
- *Ridges are separated by valleys or cwms, with streams that are tributaries of the River Vyrnwy to the north-west and River Severn to the south-east;*
- *Small to medium scale, well defined fields enclosed by hedgerows (some ancient / species-rich) with a high proportion of hedgerow trees;*
- *Important habitats present are upland oakwood, lowland mixed and deciduous woodland, hedgerows (some ancient/species-rich), lowland wood pasture and parkland, lowland meadows and fridd;*

- *A well-developed network of PRowS cross the farmland and Glyndwr's Way National Trail passes through the LCA between Bronrarth Hill and Welshpool, via the slopes of Y Golfa;*
- *Sense of place resulting from the combination of rounded hills, high proportion of woodland cover and traditional settlements;*
- *Views across neighbouring valley landscapes including the Vyrnwy Valley to the north-west, Severn Valley to the south-east, Rhiw Valley to the south and Banwy Valley to the west;*
- *Expansive views from Glyndwr's Way National Trail as it crosses the LCA including at the summit of Y Golfa."*

3.10 Under forces for change, the study notes that *"opportunities for environmental improvements and enhanced management of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and woodland (e.g. through agri-environment schemes) could result in positive landscape change"*.

Designations

3.11 Figure 4 illustrates the location of the landscape designations. The site is not covered by any national or local landscape designations such as National Park or National Landscape in Wales.

3.12 The nearest heritage and ecological designations include:

- The Montgomery Canal located adjacent to the site is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
- The nearest Listed Buildings are located along the canal and include Grade II Tanhouse Bridge (150m north) and Grade II listed Bridge over the Montgomery Canal and Bank Lock (250m east).

Site and Immediate Context

3.13 An assessment of landscape character of the site and its immediate context has been carried out, providing a finer level of assessment than the published studies.

3.14 The site is comprised of three irregular parcels of agricultural land in pastoral uses, which adjoin the Montgomery Canal to the north. Coppice Lane and two residential properties (Tan House and Yr Ysgubor) are located to the south. Bank Farm is located to the east of the site adjacent to the A483.

3.15 The fields in which the site is located are almost entirely bound by mature hedgerow and trees along the southern, western and eastern boundaries. Vegetation along the northern boundary with the Montgomery Canal includes belts of scrub and rough grassland. Mature trees and a mature hedgerow along the southern edge of canal provide a degree of enclosure. A mature outgrown hedgerow and a number of mature trees extend through the centre of the site.

3.16 The topography of the fields within the eastern section of the site slopes down from a high point of approximately 82.0m AOD at Coppice Lane in the south to a low point of approximately 66.0m at the edge of the canal. Whilst land immediately to the north of Coppice Lane slopes down relatively steeply, the gradient decreases closer to the canal. As noted by the published Landscape Character Assessment, the topography of the wider landscape is varied and comprises of the more low-lying 'Severn Farmlands' LCA and the rolling hills of the 'Guilsfield' LCA.

Visual Baseline

- 3.17 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the site. This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints have been selected and prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note on 'Visual Representation of Development Proposals' (TGN 06/19) to support this analysis.
- 3.18 Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users. The photographs may demonstrate varying degrees of visibility and include both short and longer range views. The photographs were taken on the 13th of July 2023 and seasonal differences have been taken into account when determining the visual effects on these receptors.
- 3.19 An assessment of the likely visual effects of the proposed development upon surrounding receptors is detailed in the subsequent section. Figure 6 details the location of the Photo Viewpoints and Figures 7-11 illustrates the photo viewpoints.

Visual Baseline Summary

- 3.20 Visibility of the site is restricted as a result of it being located on lower-lying land and the screening effects of the local topography combined with mature vegetation along field boundaries and the Montgomery Canal. Whilst longer distance views are likely to be possible from elevated areas of land such as Yr Golfa to the east, the site is a very small element in views at this distance and these receptors are not therefore considered to be susceptible to the scale and nature of change proposed.
- 3.21 Potential visual receptors of the proposed development considered by this assessment include the following:
- Residents of properties located within close proximity to the site boundary:
 - Tan House and Yr Ysgubor to the south of the site;
 - Bank Farm to the east of the site;
 - Residents at Oatlands, which is located to the north of the Montgomery Canal;
 - Users of the towpath along the Montgomery Canal;
 - Users of Public Right of Way 214/243/1 which is located within the site and would be diverted around the proposed waterbody;
 - Users of Public Right of Way 214/240/1 which extends through the fields to the south and west of the site;
 - Users of Public Right of Way 214/238/1 on elevated ground to the south of the site;
 - Users of Coppice Lane;
 - Users of the unnamed lane, which includes Tanhouse Bridge and is located to the north of site beyond the Montgomery Canal.

Limitations

- 3.22 In accordance with GLVIA3, the assessment of visual effects has been undertaken from publicly accessible viewpoints. It was not possible to take photographs from properties as these are private

views. Reasoned assumptions are made on visibility through the field work and, where possible, through the use of photographs from nearby public locations to provide an understanding of visibility.

4.0 LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

Introduction

- 4.1 The development proposals are described in the information accompanying the planning application. The existing landscape resource and the visual receptors and amenity of the site have been considered by the planning and design process and have informed the resultant scheme. This approach has entailed collaboration between landscape, ecological and other professionals. The landscape components of the scheme are an important integral part of the proposals.

Landscape Design and Green Infrastructure (GI) Objectives

- 4.2 The key objectives of the landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are to:
- Achieve an overall design solution which respects and enhances the character of the site and its surroundings;
 - Contribute to the guidelines for LCA 8 'Severn Farmlands and LCA 10 'Guilfield';
 - The conservation, enhancement and creation of existing and proposed habitats;
 - Mitigate and minimise as far as practicable the potential landscape and visual effects resulting from the proposals, with particularly emphasis on protecting views from neighbouring residential properties.

Landscape and GI Proposals

- 4.3 The landscape and GI proposals for the scheme are detailed in the Green Infrastructure Statement accompanying the planning application. In summary these proposals include:
- Creation of a substantial new pond adjacent to the Montgomery Canal, which would be designed to be a naturalistic in appearance and form. The pond would have an irregular shoreline and sloping vegetated banks much like the existing nature reserve managed by the Canal & River Trust at Aston Locks. Water levels in the pond would be designed to fluctuate and mimic a natural waterbody;
 - New naturalistic wetland planting would be designed to provide additional habitat to support biodiversity. It is anticipated that this would comprise a proportion of self-colonisation from the surrounding wetland habitats and planting of native species including *Luronium natans*, a plant for which the Montgomery Canal is internationally protected;
 - If possible, the creation of a landscaped habitat bund in the western section of the site using some of the material excavated to create the pond would be designed to blend and connect with the surrounding topography and resemble natural landform. The height of the bund would be kept to a minimum up to a height of 3.0m. The bund would be seeded and planted in order to soften its appearance and help it to assimilate with its immediate landscape context;
 - Existing vegetation around the perimeter of the site would be retained and supplemented with new planting where appropriate. This includes the existing hedgerows which would be enhanced through management and supplementary planting where gaps are present. Whilst some minor hedgerow removal would be required to accommodate the proposed pond, the

existing mature tree and its root protection area at the centre of the site would be protected as a result of careful siting of the waterbody;

- 4.4 The landscape and green infrastructure (GI) proposals will establish an attractive framework within which to integrate a nature reserve, with the retention of existing landscape features and new additional features providing opportunities to strengthen local landscape character as well as biodiversity enhancements.

Landscape Management

- 4.5 The Trust will manage and maintain the site.

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

- 5.1 The following section outlines the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from proposed development on the site.

Landscape Effects

Construction

- 5.2 During the construction phase there would inevitably be some adverse landscape effects arising from the temporary work and disturbance. These effects are anticipated to include:
- *Enabling works and clearance and set up of compound area;*
 - *Erection of tree protection fencing around existing vegetation as required;*
 - *Creation of the proposed pond;*
 - *The creation of a connected bunded habitat area using some of the excavated soil;*
 - *Construction traffic, including HGVs and staff cars travelling to and from the site.*
- 5.3 All construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to minimise any adverse impact on landscape character. Some existing vegetation would be removed to create the pond and appropriate methods will be adopted to protect retained trees and vegetation based upon BS 5837.
- 5.4 The construction phase is likely to be over a relatively short duration and the landscape effects are judged to be no greater than **negligible** on the local landscape character areas and **minor adverse** at the level of the site and its immediate context.

Operation (following Completion)

Landscape Character Assessments

At a local scale, the site is located within LCA 8 'Severn Farmlands' and LCA 10 'Guilfield' as defined in the Landscape Character Assessment for the Powys Local Development Plan (LDP) Area (2022). It is considered that the proposed development would have a direct effect upon limited parts of both Landscape Character Areas. The operational effect of the proposed development upon these Landscape Character Areas is considered to be **negligible** at completion and **negligible-minor beneficial** at Year 15 as a result of the new pond and proposed planting and habitat creation, which would replace existing areas of agricultural land at the edge of the canal. The proposals would contribute at a local level to the guidelines for LCA 8 and LCA10 as a result of opening up and enhancing views of the Montgomery Canal and the enhanced management of existing retained trees and hedgerows.

Site and Immediate Context

- 5.5 The site and its immediate context are considered to have a **low-medium** susceptibility to change to the type of development proposed. Whilst the site is not designated at a national or local level and has no known associations with particular people or events, analysis of landscape value has determined that the site and its immediate context has a **medium** landscape value overall. This is primarily a result of its rural location and context, scenic quality and the presence of features such as the mature hedgerows, tree cover and the Montgomery Canal.

- 5.6 Whilst the proposed development would result in the loss of a relatively small area of pastoral and agricultural land, these features would be replaced by the creation of a new nature reserve alongside the Montgomery Canal. The new reserve would comprise the establishment of a mosaic of new habitats including a large new pond, tree, scrub and hedgerow planting, areas of species rich grassland and wetland planting. Wetland planting would include the establishment of *Luronium natans*, a plant for which the Welsh section of the canal is internationally protected.
- 5.7 The pond has been designed to have a naturalistic appearance, which would incorporate varied slope profiles and an irregular plan form, which would follow the Montgomery Canal and surrounding topography. The pond has been set back from areas of more steeply sloping ground along the southern boundary of the fields in order to minimise effects of excavations on the topography of the site. Water levels in the pond would fluctuate in order to resemble a natural waterbody. The pond would be predominantly open water but would also consist of areas of reedbed to enhance their biodiversity value.
- 5.8 If possible, excavated material from the pond would be retained and recycled on site to create an attractive landform and habitat area within the eastern field parcel. The bund would be designed to complement the attractive rural character and topography of the area being limited to a maximum of 3.0m in height and a varied slope profile to give a more naturalistic appearance. Seeding of the bunds would create new grassland habitat and further soften the appearance of bunds and ensure these features blend with their surroundings.
- 5.9 Whilst it would be necessary to remove a section of existing hedgerow and limited areas of vegetation along the northern boundary with the canal to facilitate construction of the pond and water control structures, other vegetation (including vegetation along the site boundaries) would be almost entirely retained and assist in assimilating the proposals within the surrounding landscape.
- 5.10 Overall, the proposed development would result in a **negligible** landscape effect upon the site and its immediate context at completion. Following establishment of the proposed grassland, wetland, woodland, tree and hedgerow planting, it is considered that the overall landscape effect would be **minor beneficial** as a result of the green infrastructure proposals. The nature and scale of the proposals and surrounding topography and vegetation would limit the spread of indirect landscape effects beyond the site boundaries and its immediate context. It is therefore considered that the proposals would result in minimal influence on the wider landscape.

Visual Effects (VE)

- 5.11 The VE (Figure 6) of the proposed development identifies the surrounding land from within which views towards any part of the proposed development are likely to be visible. The VE is not however an indicator of the effect of the proposed development on the view but simply its visible extent in the surrounding landscape.
- 5.12 A hand drawn VE for the proposed development was initially prepared based on the local topography context. This has been reviewed on site and refined to take account of the visual screening provided by buildings, trees and other features.
- 5.13 The visual envelope of the proposed development is restricted as a result of being located on low-lying land and the surrounding topography and high levels of tree and hedgerow cover. This

includes vegetation along the Montgomery Canal, which extends along the northern boundary of the site.

- 5.14 There could be some limited locations beyond the extent of the VE shown that could have a potential distant or very limited view to a part of the development. Equally, there could be some locations shown within the VE that would not experience any views to the development.

Construction

- 5.15 During the construction phase there would be some temporary visual effects arising from the construction activities. All construction works would be carried out in accordance with best practice procedures to protect and to minimise, as far as possible, adverse effects upon visual amenity.
- 5.16 During the construction phase, adverse effects upon the local visual resource will occur and this depends on the actual extent of visibility of the site for receptors. Inevitably, those receptors in closest proximity that have direct views of the site will experience views of construction activity to include vehicles and associated machinery, site compounds and earthworks/ground modelling.

Operation (following Completion)

- 5.17 The following provides a summary of the visual effects assessment.

Residential Properties and Settlement

- 5.18 As noted above, it was not possible to take photographs from properties as these are private views. Reasoned assumptions are made on visibility through the field work and, where possible, through the use of photographs from nearby public locations to provide an understanding of visibility.

Residents at Tan House and Yr Ysgubor

- 5.19 Views of the proposed nature reserve would be possible from Tan House and Yr Ysgubor, which are located adjacent to the western section of the site. Existing views across the agricultural fields would be replaced by views of the proposed bunds, pond and associated planting. The height of the bunds would be limited to approximately 3.0m above the existing ground levels and slopes have been carefully designed to mimic natural landform and ensure that longer distance views out from these properties are maintained. Views of the bund and pond would be screened and filtered to varying degrees by vegetation along the property boundaries.
- 5.20 Whilst there would be some short-term adverse effects during construction, it is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion of the works and **negligible-minor beneficial** at year 15 following establishment of new grassland, scrub and trees.

Residents at Bank Farm

- 5.21 Views of the proposed nature reserve may be possible from the first floor windows of Bank Farm, which is located to the east of the site. Views would be partially screened by the existing hedgerow along the site boundary and intervening tree cover. Where views are possible, these would primarily be of the proposed pond and associated planting.
- 5.22 Whilst there would be some short-term adverse effects during construction, it is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion of the works

and **negligible-minor beneficial** at year 15 following establishment of new grassland, scrub and trees.

Residents at Oatlands

- 5.23 Views towards the site from Oatlands are largely screened by existing mature tree cover along the canal and intervening field boundaries. Where partial views of the site are possible, views of the agricultural field would be replaced by views of the new waterbody.
- 5.24 Whilst there would be some short-term adverse effects during construction, it is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion of the works and at Year 15.

Public Rights of Way (PROW) and Other Footpaths etc

Users of Public Right of Way 214/243/1 (Viewpoint A)

- 5.25 This Public Right of Way would be diverted around the proposed waterbody to maintain public access to the southern edge of the Montgomery Canal. Clear and unobstructed views of the proposed nature reserve would be possible from this short section of Public Right of Way, which stops at the edge of the Montgomery Canal. Views of the existing agricultural land would be largely replaced by views of the new pond and bund, which would be sympathetically designed and planted to resemble natural landform and waterbodies. Access around the western edge of the pond would be retained.
- 5.26 Whilst there would be some short-term adverse effects during construction, it is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion of the works and **minor beneficial** at year 15 following establishment of new grassland, scrub and trees.

Users of Public Right of Way 214/240/1 (Viewpoints C and D)

- 5.27 The route of this Public Right of Way as shown on Ordnance Survey mapping does not match the route shown on the online Powys Definitive Map. The Viewpoint Photographs are taken from the route shown on the Definitive Map.
- 5.28 Visibility of the site varies along the length of this Public Right of Way, which extends west from Coppice Lane through the fields to the south and west of the site. Where the footpath rises up the slope from Coppice Lane, partial views across the eastern section of the site are possible. Views of the agricultural land along the southern edge of the canal would be largely replaced by views of the proposed pond and associated planting. The pond has been carefully designed to blend with existing topography and to resemble a natural waterbody.
- 5.29 Where the footpath extends east towards Tan House, views are partially screened by the existing hedgerow along the site boundary. It is anticipated that views of the proposed bund would be possible from this section of the footpath. The bund would be designed to resemble a natural landform and planted in order to soften its appearance in the medium term.
- 5.30 Whilst there would be some short-term adverse effects during construction, it is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion of the works and **minor beneficial** at year 15 following establishment of new grassland, scrub and trees.

Users of Public Right of Way 214/238/1 (Viewpoint J)

- 5.31 Views of the site from this Public Right of Way, which extends along higher ground to the south of the site, are screened by overlapping belts of vegetation along intervening field boundaries and the undulating landform. It is therefore considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion and at year 15.

Users of Montgomery Canal Towpath (Viewpoints E and F)

- 5.32 Views of the proposed nature reserve from the towpath along the Montgomery Canal would be limited to a relatively short section of the route where users travel along southern boundary of the site. Views would be filtered to varying degrees by existing vegetation along the canal. Existing views of agricultural land would be largely replaced by views of the new pond and bund, which would be sympathetically designed and planted to resemble natural landform and waterbodies. Where it is necessary to remove sections of the existing hedgerow to create the pond and control structure, this would be mitigated for by replacement planting within the site.
- 5.33 Whilst there would be some short-term adverse effects during construction, it is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion of the works and **minor beneficial** at year 15 following establishment of new grassland, scrub and trees.

Users of Other Public Rights of Way

- 5.34 Opportunities for views towards the proposed nature reserve from other PROW within the wider landscape are generally limited, largely due to nature of the topography and the presence of existing and extensive nearby settlement and development. Where occasional views are possible, the resultant effects of the proposed nature reserve are anticipated to be no greater than **Negligible** as a result of the distance and scale and nature of the proposals.

Roads & Transport Users*Users of Coppice Lane (Viewpoint B)*

- 5.35 Views towards the proposed nature reserve would be largely screened from Coppice Lane as a result of the existing boundary hedgerow and trees. Views would generally only be possible from a short section of the lane where the boundary is defined by a post and wire fence only. Views would be primarily of the new waterbody and associated planting with the bund largely screened by built development and vegetation at Tan House and Yr Ysgubor.
- 5.36 Whilst there would be some short-term adverse effects during construction, it is considered that the visual effect of the proposed development would be **negligible** upon completion of the works and **negligible-minor beneficial** at year 15 following establishment of new grassland, scrub and trees.

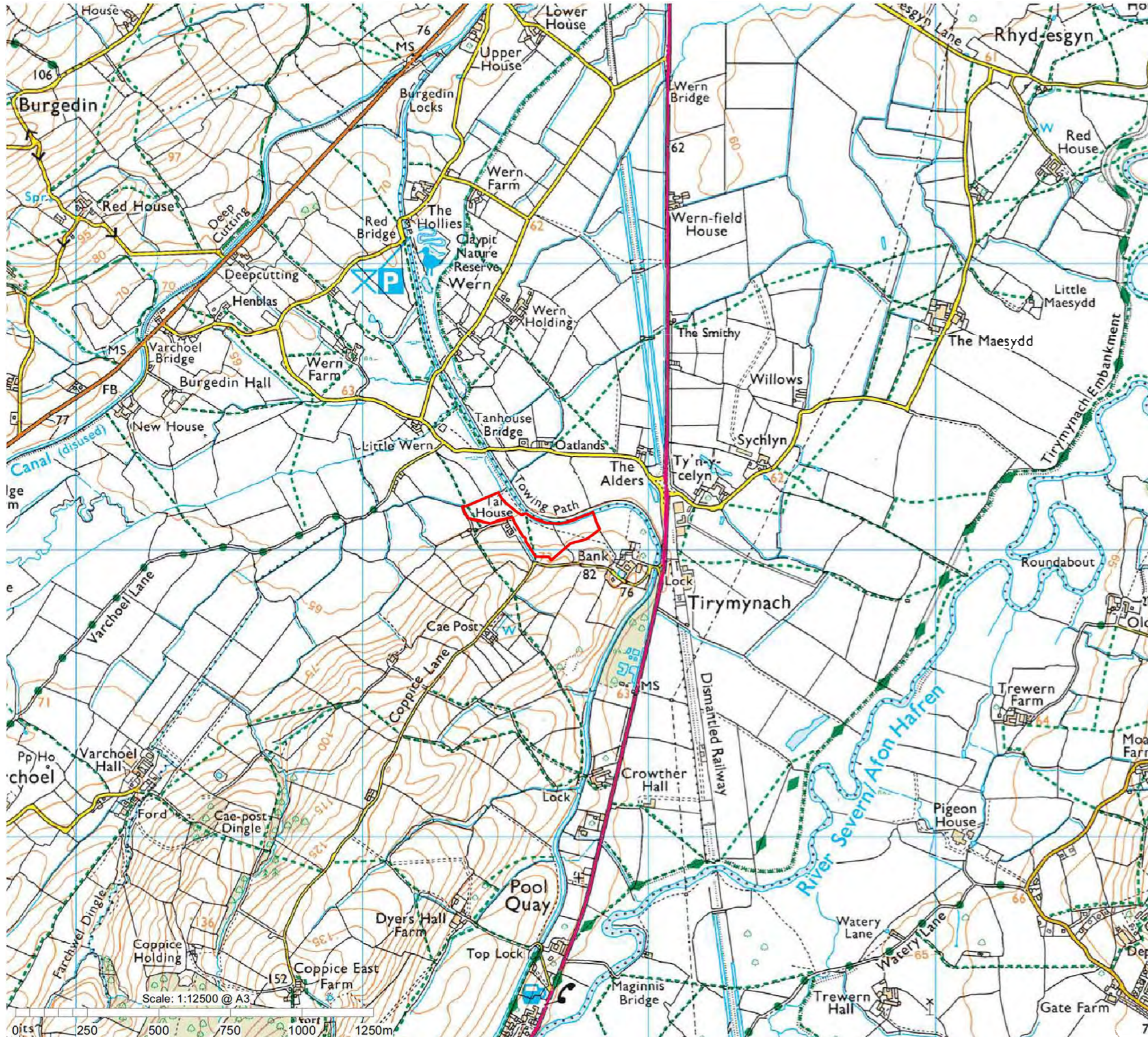
Users of unnamed lane to north of site (including Tanhouse Bridge) (Viewpoints G, H and I)

- 5.37 Vegetation along the lane, intervening field boundaries and the Montgomery Canal limit views from the lane to occasional glimpsed views towards the site. Where views are possible, the proposed pond and bund would be designed to blend with the existing landform and planted sympathetically. It is therefore considered that the proposed nature reserve would result in a **negligible** visual effect at completion and year 15.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 FPCR Environment and Design Ltd were commissioned to prepare a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) in connection with the proposed development of a new nature reserve on land north of Coppice Lane.
- 6.2 The LVA set out to provide an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of change resulting from the proposed development on both landscape as an environmental resource and on people's views and visual amenity. This has included assessment of the effects of the proposed development on the 'Severn Farmlands' LCA and 'Guilsfield' LCA as well as the landscape character and features of the site and its immediate context. The assessment has also considered the visual effects of the proposed development on residential properties and users of local roads and Public Rights of Way as well as residents of adjoining and nearby properties.
- 6.3 The proposed development is a new nature reserve adjoining the Montgomery Canal, which would comprise the establishment of a mosaic of new habitats including a large new pond, tree, scrub and hedgerow planting, areas of species rich grassland and wetland planting. The pond has been designed to have a naturalistic appearance, which would incorporate varied slope profiles and an irregular plan form, which would follow the Montgomery Canal and surrounding topography. If possible, some excavated material from the pond would be retained and recycled on site to create an attractive landform and habitat area within the eastern field parcel. The bund would be designed to complement the attractive rural character and topography of the area being limited to a maximum of 3.0m in height with varied slope profile to give a more naturalistic appearance.
- 6.4 The assessment found that the level of landscape effect of the proposed development on the local landscape character areas would be **negligible** at completion and **negligible-minor beneficial** at Year 15. At the level of the site and its immediate context, the assessment considered that the proposed development would result in a **negligible** landscape effect at completion and a **minor beneficial** effect at Year 15 due to the proposed habitat creation and new planting.
- 6.5 Survey work determined that the visual envelope of the proposed development was limited by the surrounding topography and high levels of tree cover, including alongside the Montgomery Canal to the north. The most noticeable visual effects of the proposed development would be from three residential properties located adjacent to the site and a limited number of nearby Public Rights of Way. The visual effects from these receptors would be no greater than **minor adverse** at construction in the short term and no greater than **negligible** at Year 15 as a result of the green infrastructure proposals, which would result in some localised beneficial effects.
- 6.6 Overall, it is considered that the proposed nature reserve could be accommodated within the site and local landscape and that the landscape proposals would result in some limited and localised beneficial effects.

ⁱ Planning Policy Wales (PPW) Edition 5 (2012)



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KEY
 Site Boundary

fpcr client
 Canal and River Trust

project
 Wern Nature Reserve,
 Montgomery Canal

drawing title
SITE LOCATION

scale 1:12500 @ A3 dm chk date created
 JCK EAF 28 June 2023

drawing/figure number
Figure 1 issue

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KEY
 Site Boundary



fpcr client
 Canal and River Trust

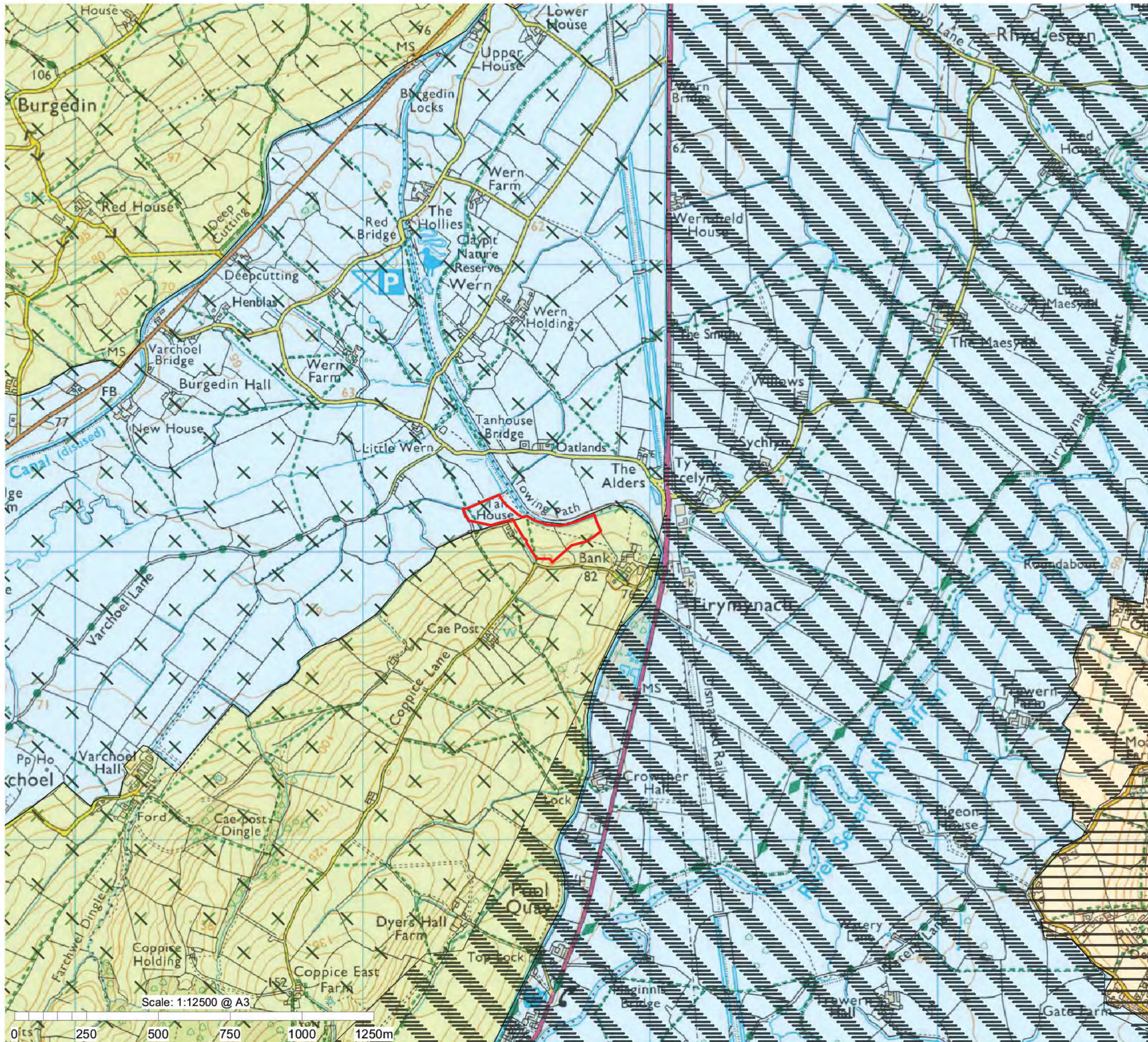
project
 Wern Nature Reserve,
 Montgomery Canal

drawing title
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

scale 1:12500 @ A3 dm JCK chk EAF date created 28 June 2023

drawing/figure number **Figure 2** issue


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KEY

 Site Boundary


Powys Landscape Character Areas
(Powys Landscape Character Assessment Report 2022)

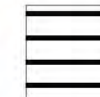
 8 - Severn Farmlands

 10 - Guilsfield

 11 - Long Mountain/Breidden Hills

National Landscape Character Areas
(Powys Landscape Character Assessment Report 2022)

 17 - Long Mountain/Breidden Hills

 18 - Shropshire Hills

 19 - Severn Valley

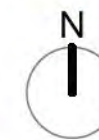
client
Canal and River Trust

project
Wern Nature Reserve,
Montgomery Canal

drawing title
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

scale 1:12500 @ A3 dm chk date created
JCK EAF 28 June 2023

drawing/figure number
Figure 3 issue












Scale: 1:12500 @ A3

0 250 500 750 1000 1250m




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- KEY**
-  Site Boundary
 -  Footpath (PRoW)
 -  Bridleway (PRoW)
 -  Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
 -  Ancient Woodland
 -  Scheduled Ancient Monument
 -  Listed Building
 -  Listed Bridge
 -  Listed Lock / Canal Feature
- * Site and surrounding area falls within Powys Local Authority boundary

Scale: 1:12500 @ A3
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client
 Canal and River Trust

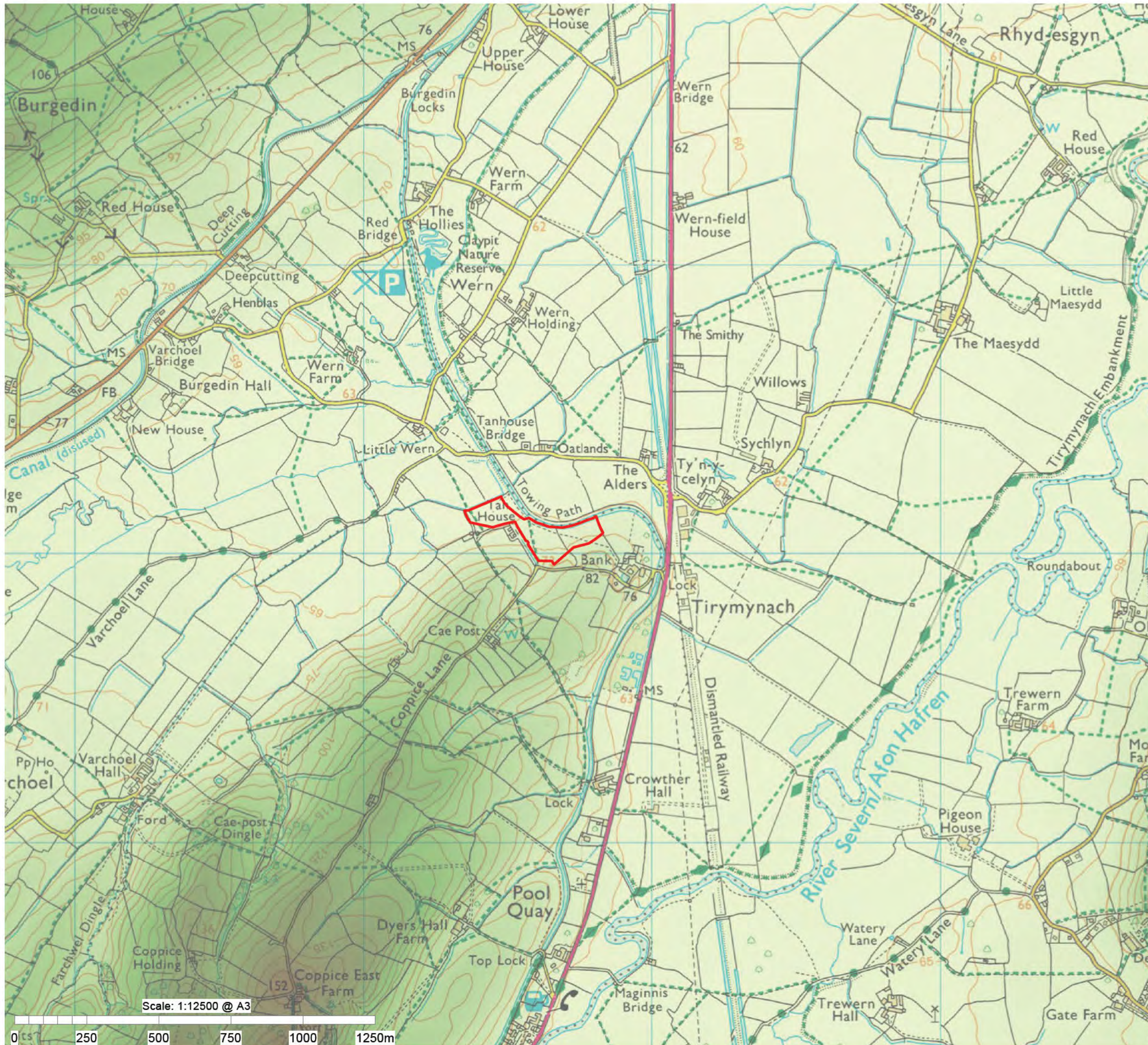
project
 Wern Nature Reserve,
 Montgomery Canal

 drawing title
DESIGNATIONS

scale 1:12500 @ A3 drn JCK chk EAF date created 28 June 2023

drawing/figure number **Figure 4** issue

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- KEY**
-  Site Boundary
 -  <= 60m A.O.D.
 -  60m - 70m A.O.D.
 -  70m - 80m A.O.D.
 -  80m - 90m A.O.D.
 -  90m - 100m A.O.D.
 -  100m - 110m A.O.D.
 -  110m - 120m A.O.D.
 -  120m - 130m A.O.D.
 -  130m - 140m A.O.D.
 -  140m - 150m A.O.D.
 -  150m - 160m A.O.D.
 -  > 160m A.O.D.

client
Canal and River Trust

project
Wern Nature Reserve,
Montgomery Canal

drawing title
TOPOGRAPHY

scale
1:12500 @ A3

dmn
JCK

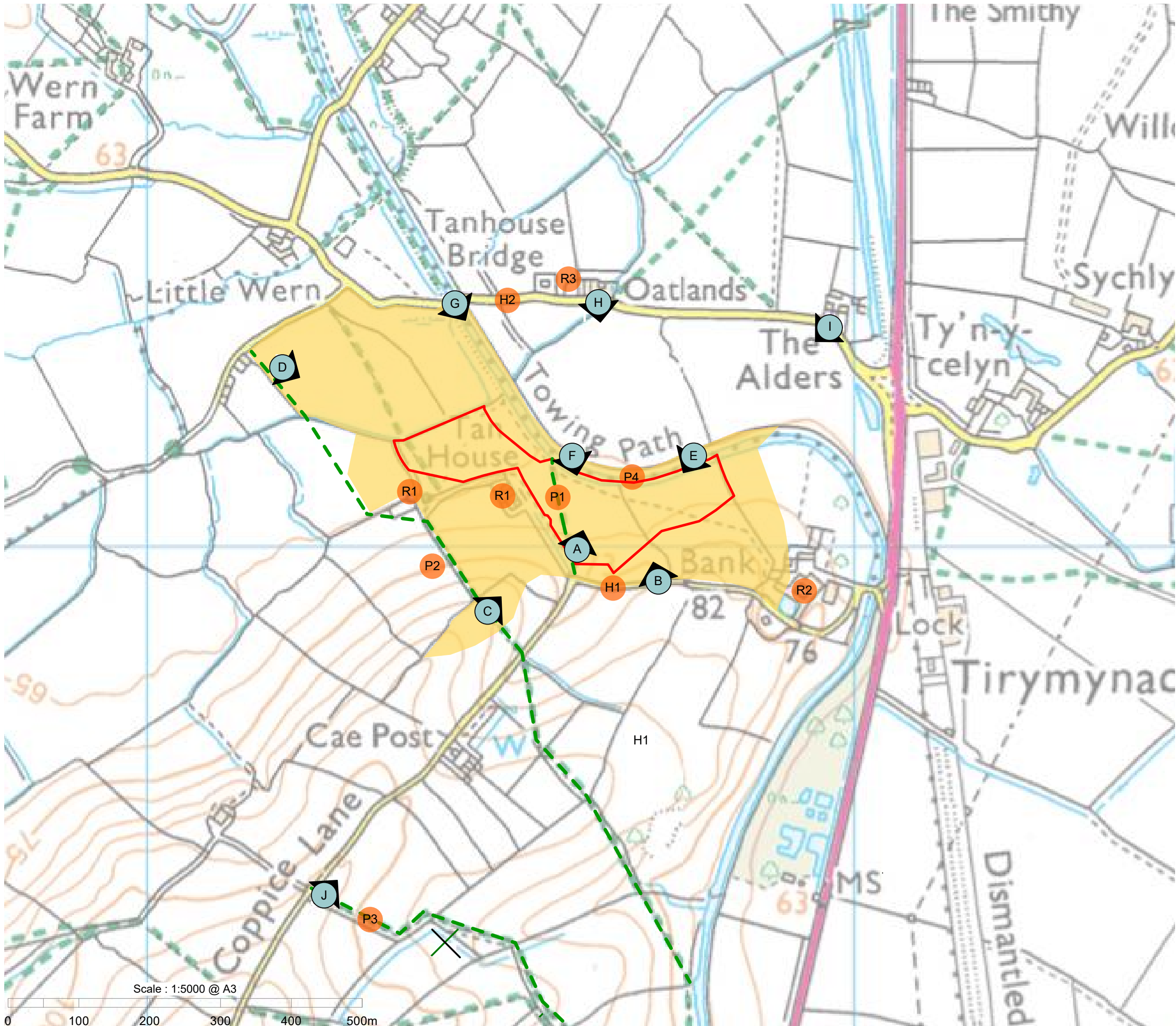
chk
EAF

date created
28 June 2023

drawing/figure number
Figure 5






issue
-

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KEY

-  Site Boundary
-  Public Rights of Way
From Powys CC Definitive Map
-  Viewpoint Location
-  Visual Envelope (VE)
The VE provides a representative boundary and representative area of visual influence. Within the VE, existing landscape and / or physical features provide localised screening effects. Further distant views may occur outside the VE boundary, although the effects of the proposed development upon these views is considered to be negligible as a result of the distance and intervening screening effects.
-  Receptor Reference

- Ref Receptor**
- R1** Residents at Tan House and Yr ysgubor
 - R2** Residents at Bank Farm
 - R3** Residents at Oatlands Farm
 - P1** Users of PROW 214/243/1
 - P2** Users of PROW 214/240/1
 - P3** Users of PROW 214/238/1
 - P4** Users of the towpath
 - H1** Users of Coppice Lane
 - H2** Users of unnamed lane (including views from Tanhouse bridge)

client
Canal and River Trust

project
Wern Nature Reserve,
Montgomery Canal

fpcr
drawing title
VISUAL APPRAISAL

scale 1:5000 @ A3 dm JCK chk EAF date created 28 June 2023

drawing/figure number **Figure 6** issue -

N
0 100 200 300 400 500m

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