

**ES4.8**

White  
Young  
Green

**DTZ**

Residential Development off Tanglewood Drive,  
Blaina

**Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report**

26 June 2008

**TANGLEWOOD DRIVE, BLAINA**  
*Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report*

**CONTENTS**

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.0	THE SITE: DESCRIPTION .....	2
3.0	PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT .....	2
4.0	BASELINE CONDITIONS .....	3
5.0	LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT .....	5
6.0	SUMMARY.....	5
7.0	APPENDIX.....	6

**TANGLEWOOD DRIVE, BLAINA**

*Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 DTZ on behalf of a developer are promoting a parcel of greenfield land at Blaina, for residential development through the Landscape Development Plan (LDP).
- 1.2 This report provides a brief description of the possible landscape and visual effect of the proposed development on the environment and the method by which these possible effects should be assessed.
- 1.3 The project is at an early stage and it is noted that during any subsequent assessment process the statutory, non-statutory bodies and other interested parties should be consulted for potential comments on the impacts of the scheme and appropriate mitigation measures which may be incorporated into the project.

## **2.0 THE SITE: DESCRIPTION**

- 2.1 The site extends for approximately 1.75 ha (4.3 acres). It is located on the eastern edge of Blaina in the Ebbw Fach valley, approximately 3 km south of Brynmawr and 5km north of Abertillery. The location of the site, which lies on the western slopes of Mynydd James at between 333 and 362m AOD, is illustrated on Figure 1.
- 2.2 The site is bounded to the north by a variety of boundary treatments to a new development of residential properties. A remnant hedge bank with a stock proof fence enclosing grassland pasture forms the eastern boundary, with open mountain pasture on the higher slopes further to the east. To the south there is a dilapidated stone wall behind which is a stock proof fencing and an area of natural moorland / woodland regeneration. The north-western boundary is formed with a stock proof fence with a block of deciduous woodland beyond and with open grassland to the south-west.
- 2.3 The site, which slopes steeply from east to west, is currently used as a paddock for horses. In addition there is an area of construction storage at the north with two metal storage containers and access from the adjacent residential development.
- 2.4 There is a stream flowing down the slope at the northern end of the site and a small area of impounded drainage at the southern end. There are no trees within the site, and a single specimen sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) on the eastern boundary.

## **3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.1 The development proposals for the site is for residential usage, primarily 2 storey houses at a density of 30-40 per hectare. It is assumed that the overall masterplan for the site will broadly follow the structure of the adjacent residential development consisting of access roads running north-south along the contours with individual 'design and build' plots on either side.

## **4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS**

### ***Designations***

- 4.1 The Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council Unitary Development Plan (adopted July 2006) designates part of the site within a Special Landscape Area [SLA] (EN18). Special landscape areas are those which make a substantial contribution to Blaenau Gwent's identity, diversity and quality with their own features and distinctive sense of place. These landscape are dependent upon a combination of many different elements including topography, the type and location of trees, woodland and other vegetation, the character of settlements, the nature of the river valleys and local farming techniques. EN18 states: "Development proposals in areas designated as Special Landscape Areas will require to demonstrate respect for their setting in terms of design, setting and landscaping. Development proposals detrimental to the features or qualities of Special Landscape Areas will not be permitted."
- 4.2 The site is located outside of the defined urban area. The newly developed residential area to the north is however allocated as H2 housing and the area being identified as H2(30) Cwm Farm, with an area of 11 ha within which 246 housing units are proposed.
- 4.3 The mountain slopes of Mynydd James are designated as 'access land' in accordance with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW). The site is not included within the access land, the boundary of which extends to include the area directly south of the site.
- 4.4 There are no designated public rights of way within the site area. There is a footpath which runs directly east-west to the south of the site within the 'access land' from the mountain down into the settlement of Blaina.
- 4.5 There are none of the following statutory designations within or adjacent to the site:
  - Cultural heritage
    - Scheduled ancient monuments (SAMS)
    - Listed buildings
    - Historic Parks and Gardens
    - World Heritage site
  - Nature Conservation
    - Special area of Conservation (SAC)
    - Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI)
    - National Nature Reserve
    - Local Nature Reserve
    - Ancient woodland
    - National Park
- 4.6 Designations are illustrated on Figure 2

### **LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT:**

#### ***Landscape context***

- 4.7 The site is situated above the confluence of the Nant Ystruth and the Ebbw Fach. The narrow north-south valley sits between the ridges the Mynydd Carn-y-Cefn (550m AOD) to the west



**TANGLEWOOD DRIVE, BLAINA**  
*Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report*

and the Mynydd James (550m AOD) to the east, with the steep slopes below these ridges forming a backdrop enclosing the narrow valley floor.

- 4.8 The upper mountain slopes are exposed and open, with mainly grass and heather moorland. The moorland and valley sides are predominantly rough grazing for sheep although where grazing is restricted, such as directly south of the site, natural regeneration of heather and native tree species has occurred.
- 4.9 On the lower slopes the interface between the agricultural land and the urban areas is frequently neglected, with dilapidated stone walls, urban fringe activities including paddocks, such as the site, used for 'horsiculture'. There are patches of coniferous and deciduous shelter planting and individual broadleaf trees scattered throughout, particularly on the middle and lower slopes. There are a few signs of remnant quarrying and tipping operations.
- 4.10 The Landmap evaluation (the CCW landscape character classification methodology) of the visual and sensory aspects of this particular locality is 'moderate', based on a strong topography but with too many unsightly and inappropriate developments. The evaluation considers that the area is in 'fair condition', with poor parts and unsightly neglect, and to be in a 'declining trend'. The site is considered a 'good fit' with respect to the overall area evaluation.
- 4.11 A number of settlements are located within the valley which forms a continuous urban area extending from Brynmawr at the head of valley in the north through Nantyglo to Blaina in the south. Further south is the town of Abertillery occupying the widening valley floor at the confluence of the Ebbw Fach and the Afon Tyleri. Whilst residential buildings occupy the majority of the urban areas, there are a few large scale industrial buildings located between Blaina and Nantyglo.
- 4.12 On the west side of the valley the steeper slopes of Mynydd Carn-y-cefn has limited the urban extension from the valley floor and maintains rural character to the side slopes. On the east, below Mynydd James the upper limit of urban development is approximately 360-380m AOD, contained and bounded with blocks of deciduous and coniferous woodland and enclosed pasture.
- 4.13 The valley settlements are characterised by low rows of terraced houses following the contours whilst creeping up the valley sides are a mixture of more recent housing styles, including detached, semi-detached and terraced properties, which creates un-coordinated appearance.
- 4.14 On the valley floor the A467 links the settlements although recent highway improvements mean that the road by-passes the majority of town and village centres.

**Visual Assessment**

- 4.15 The landform, vegetation pattern and existing urban settlement/development, restrict the visibility of the site from the wider area.
- 4.16 The backdrop of the steep sides of the mountain ridges of Maen Carn-y-Cefn and Mynydd James to the east and west form the skyline on both sides of the valley and enclose elements of all the settlements within the narrow valley floor. The hillsides and ridges emphasise the strong contrast between the urban character in the valley and rural character on the valley sides and ridges provide a clear sense of place and are therefore very important visually.

**TANGLEWOOD DRIVE, BLAINA**  
*Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report*

- 4.17 The publicly accessible open access areas of higher ground in close proximity to the site to the east offers potential views, however the site is generally seen in the context of the existing urban area and adjacent residential area, and the foreshortening effect of the landform means that the site is not a dominant or important feature in the view.
- 4.18 There are middle distance views from the urban areas of Cwm Celyn to the north and from West Side on the opposite side of the valley, and also views in a south-westward direction down the Ebbw Fach valley.
- 4.19 There are nearer views available from the residential development on E Pen-twyn, however because of its lower elevation, and the intervening vegetation, the land within the site is generally screened from these views, with the exception of a small gap between the woodland and scrub in the south-west corner of the site which provides vistas to the valley.

## **5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL IMPACT**

- 5.1 The existing semi-rural landscape character of the site, as described in the baseline conditions, will be lost as a result of development. However whilst the site is largely in agricultural usage it has been 'improved' for paddock grazing and as such is peripheral to the typical moorland grassland in the area.
- 5.2 The development of the site will have limited impact on the near and middle distance views due to intervening vegetation and existing built development. The 'access land' and areas of higher ground offer potential for views but the site will be seen in the context of the existing urban area and does not extend above the 365m contour which defines the upper limit of existing development boundaries in this section of the valley.
- 5.3 Views of the site from nearby residential properties will be affected, however the scale of the proposed development and the relationship of the site to its context may be suitably modified by careful building and layout design.
- 5.4 The implementation of landscape infrastructure planting as possible mitigation could include the introduction of a landscape buffer planting area on the eastern boundary to strengthen the interface between the urban / rural landuses, and the inclusion of a buffer zone to the south to protect the natural regeneration within the 'access land' from uncontrolled access and/or unsuitable usage.
- 5.5 The construction works will impact on the existing water regime within the site and mitigation measures will be required to ensure that engineered cut slopes are protected from erosion and blend into the existing landscape.

## **6.0 SUMMARY**

- 6.1 The potential adverse landscape and visual effects of the proposed development are of significance in respect to the SLA designation. However with due regard given to the overall scheme design and the integration of landscape proposals these effects may be mitigated to the extent of demonstrating respect for their setting and therefore not detrimental to the features or qualities of the Special Landscape Area.

**TANGLEWOOD DRIVE, BLAINA**

*Landscape and Visual Impact Scoping Report*

**7.0 APPENDIX**

Figure 01 Site Location

Figure 02 Designations

Figure 03 Site Photographs



DTZ  
Tanglewood Drive, Blaina  
Site Location 01

Legend  
Site



Scale 1:25,000  
0 0.5 1Km  
Note: Do NOT scale from this drawing. Use figured dimensions only.





DTZ

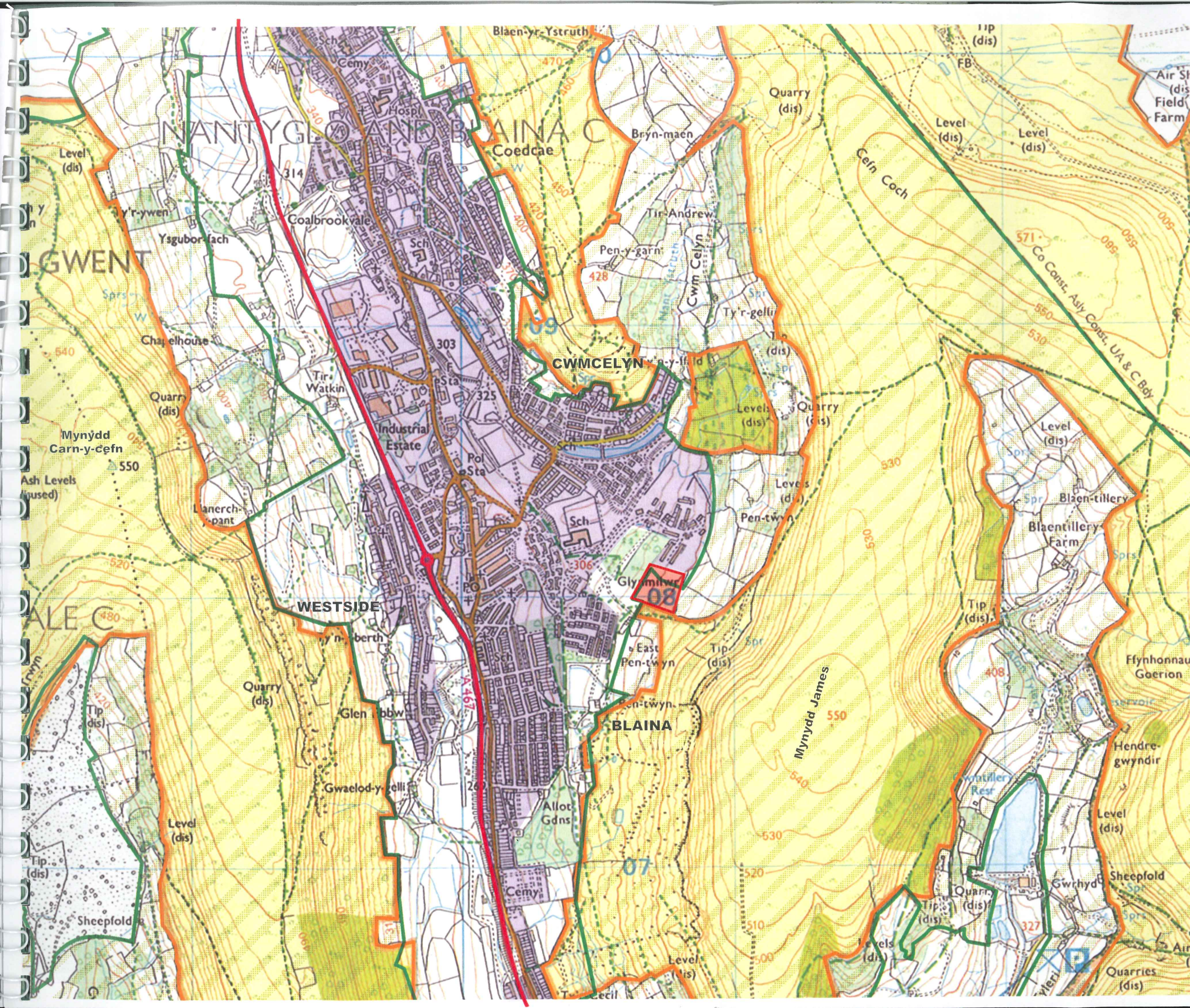
Tanglewood Drive, Blaina

Designations

02

Legend

-  Site
-  A467
-  Special Landscape Area
-  Urban Areas
-  Access Land
-  Public Right of Way



Scale 1:12,500

0 250 500m

Note: Do NOT scale from this drawing. Use figured dimensions only.



WYG ref: A046247 \ Landscape \ Dwg \ 02 Designations.cdr

Date  
04 June 2008

Drawn  
HS

Checked  
PRB

© 2008 White Young Green Consulting Ltd.



DTZ

Tanglewood Drive, Blaina

Site Photographs

03



Photograph 01. View towards the north-west from farmland adjacent to south-east corner of the site



Photograph 02. View of Mynydd James from the west of the site



Photograph 04. View of existing housing to the north of the site from the south-west corner of the site



Photograph 06. View across the site from the north-east corner of the site



Photograph 03. View of moorland and natural regenerating woodland to the south of the site



Photograph 05. View of existing housing to the north of the site

Date of Photographs: 28 May 2008

WYG ref: A046247 \ Landscape \ Dwg \ 03 Site Photographs.cdr

Date  
04 June 2008

Drawn  
HS

Checked  
PRB

© 2008 White Young Green Consulting Ltd.