

Appendix 6
Oswestry landscape appraisal

OSWESTRY BOROUGH

LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

The following summarises:

- the principal landscape constraints and opportunities to the accommodation of greenfield development around Oswestry, and
- the most appropriate directions for growth, for a landscape and visual perspective, at six other smaller settlements (as identified by Oswestry Borough Council – OBC).

The County Council have undertaken a landscape character assessment of the county, which defines the various landscape character types within Shropshire (The Shropshire Landscape Typology – Sept. 2006). This is a broad scale assessment and does not define landscape character areas or the sensitivity of the character types to change. There is no landscape character assessment of the Borough which would provide further detail that is more relevant to this study.

The town, and a number of the Boroughs other settlements subject to this study are close to or within an Area of Special Landscape Character (ASLC); these areas have been defined at a county level with boundaries being defined in the Local Plan. Whilst local landscape designations are tending to be phased out following the advice in PPS7, with emphasis being placed on the landscape character approach, they are within the Adopted Borough Plan at present and are therefore referred to here. Policy NE1 indicates that the 'visual quality of the countryside' will be protected within such areas.

Environmental designations/constraints have been identified from the Adopted Borough Local Plan.

Gobowen

There are no strategic level constraints at this settlement except the flood areas identified along various streams, which cross the settlement, and the Scheduled Ancient Monument of Wat's Dyke which extends north and south of the village.

The northern part of the settlement is constrained by the variable landform, the floodplain, and Henlle Park golf course, set within a parkland landscape with many mature trees. The edge of the settlement is contained by the topography from the landscape beyond.

Rhewl, to the north east is separated from the main part of the village by the floodplain and is located on a ridge adjoining reasonably open farmland.

The eastern side of the village is fairly well contained from the open countryside that lies beyond. Site GOB019 does not follow any logical outer boundary and would intrude into a large arable field.

The principal opportunities to accommodate development are on the southern and western sides of the village. Existing allocations at GOB008 and GOB011 have yet to be developed (the latter site appears to be subject to a flood constraint). GOB012 would be a logical and well contained extension of the existing residential allocation where development is currently underway; it is well contained from the wider landscape.

If further development needs to be accommodated there appears to be an opportunity to extend GOB008 southwards into the land to the north of Agnes Hunt Village, subject to the protection of trees.

There appear to be no landscape/visual constraints to the various small sites that lie around the hospital site, although these are some distance from the village centre, except for GOB018 which contains a number of mature trees that assists in screening development from the west.

Llanymynech

The village straddles the administrative boundary with the eastern half lying within the borough. The land within and beyond the southern edge of the village lies within the ASLC, with the southern fringe tightly constrained by an extensive flood zone along the River Vrynwy. Llanymynech Hill rises above the village to the north and forms a distinctive setting.

An area to the north of the village, comprising disused Canal, canal wharves, Hoffman (and other) limekilns and the former incline plane is designated as a Heritage Area in the Oswestry Borough Local Plan. This noted area of historical industrial landscape is unsuitable for housing development.

The significant housing allocation at the former Boral Edenhall site is currently under construction.

Site LLAN009 offers the most suitable location for additional development being quite well contained; care will be required to ensure that if this site comes forward it is planned in such a way that it will not have a detrimental impact on the planned heritage area.

Site LLAN004 is located some distance away from the settlement and is visually unrelated to it. It forms part of a more open tract of farmland and should be avoided, notwithstanding its relationship to the allocated brownfield site.

The small site LLAN007 would appear to lie adjacent to the cemetery, within an area of vegetation that forms part of the linear southern belt that defines the edge of the village. Site LLAN006 forms the corner of a larger field within the ASLC, beyond adjacent domestic curtilages. These two small sites appear to have little merit and

would set an unhelpful precedent for sporadic development on the fringes of the settlement.

Oswestry, including Morda

The A5 forms a firm eastern boundary to the town and land beyond the road has not been considered as part of this assessment. The road corridor now supports very significant belts of roadside planting which contains the visual influence of the town from the countryside to the east. Furthermore, connections between this land and the town would be limited by the road and, due to opportunities that appear to be available in locations that are more accessible, this land has been omitted from the assessment.

The north (land between A5 and B4580)

The principal constraints in the northern periphery of the town are:

- Old Oswestry Hill Fort (Scheduled Ancient Monument), which is also of value for wildlife; the setting of the fort is also protected by Local Plan Policy HE13
- Registered Park and Garden of Brogyntyn Park (covered by Local Plan Policy HE1.5)
- ASLC west of the B4579
- Green Wedge/Urban Green Net on the edge of Brogyntyn Park (covered by Local Plan Policy OS9.5)

There is also an area of recreational land containing sports pitches (Gatacre Playing Fields) between the town and the fort.

The land lying on the northern fringes of the town, between the A5 and the B4579, contributes to varying degrees to the setting of Old Oswestry Fort, which forms a prominent landmark and distinctive feature on this side of the town. The existing edge of the town has tended to largely respect the setting of the fort and has been 'held back'; the distinctive rounded wooded knoll that lies immediately south of the fort provides valuable containment to the edge of the urban area. The land allows views towards the fort from the approaches to and from the town along the B5069 and B4579. Any development within this area would have a harmful affect on the setting of the scheduled monument and adjoining countryside.

Land between the B5069 and A5 (site OSW004) comprises grass fields, crossed by pylons. However, it provides the foreground of views from the B4580 towards the monument and contributes to the more immediate undeveloped setting of the monument in views from it. There are also views north to distant wooded hill tops and

a channelled view towards the parkland at Brogyntyn Park seen through the gap between the fort and wooded knoll to the south. The industrial building north of the B4580 (Jones factory) is unscreened and detracts from the views towards the monument and a small parcel of adjacent land to the east of the works may be suitable for employment use, as long as a new strategic well-landscaped edge is delivered as part of such development to improve this aspect.

Land between the B4579 and B4580 (including site OSW041) comprises attractive parkland set on rising ground, within the ASLC. This parkland, together with stone walls, lodges and other related estate buildings creates an area of distinctive character of high scenic quality; it provides an attractive and distinctive setting to the town on the approaches along these corridors. The parkland is also highly visible from the fort and the mature trees that lie within the field boundaries between the fort appear to extend the parkland character beyond the defined parkland area.

The southern part of the parkland is also designated as Green Wedge/Urban Green Net.

Overall, the northern part of the town is very constrained and there are no opportunities to accommodate development without significant harm to the landscape and setting of valued environmental assets, as well as the setting of and approaches to the northern edge of the town.

The west (land between B4580 Mount Road and Trefonen Road)

The principal constraints along the western periphery of the town are:

- Rising land south of Mount Road
- ASLC extending up to the urban edge
- Large water works north of Broomhall Lane
- Area with parkland character south of Broomhall Lane (associated with Pen-y-llan)

The land between Mount Road and the waterworks is a continuation of the rising ground within the adjoining part of the urban area; however, the land rises more steeply westwards from the edge of the town and is therefore more prominent in views across the town from the east where it forms a backdrop. This land lies within the ASLC.

Site OSW022 is a narrow strip of fields located to the rear of existing housing; the northern part benefits from enclosure formed by woodland to the west and north. A small area of development could be accommodated in this location without significant landscape harm, and subject to a suitable access being available (without tree loss). Such a development should provide a firm landscaped southern edge. The remaining

land on this edge is unlikely to be able to accommodate development without wider harm to the attractive landscape that rises seamlessly to the west. The existing urban edge north of the waterworks complex is accommodated within a local fold in the landform, with open rising ground beyond and this forms a reasonably integrated edge.

Land to the south of the waterworks has a strong rural character and incorporates a local high point beyond which the land falls away to the Morda valley to the south west. The land has an attractive estate/parkland character, with mature trees and metal estate style fencing, which is an attractive feature on the approach to the town from the west, although a small recent development at Broom Hall is a local detractor. There is no scope for accommodating development in this area without significant harm to this attractive character and approach.

The south west (between Trefonen Road and B5069/Morda)

The principal constraints in this area are:

- The Morda valley and steep sloping sides
- Floodplain within Morda valley
- ASLC extending up to the urban edge
- Extensive playing fields associated with the school lying within Green Wedge/Urban Green Net which extends to the urban edge
- Parkland character around and east of Pen-y-Ilan.

In view of the constraints identified which cover the land between Trefonen Road and Croeswylan Lane there is no scope to accommodate development (such as at OSW053) in an acceptable form in this location.

The land falls away steeply to the south of Croeswylan Lane into the Morda valley; this land is visually exposed in views across the valley from the southern side and is unsuitable, in landscape terms, for development.

Recent development has occurred at English Gardens, on the northern valley side. Whilst this development has had a significant local landscape and visual impact on the valley, development in the eastern part of OSW019 is unlikely to have a significant additional negative impact.

Land within the valley (OSW026) is affected by the floodplain; the valley forms an attractive landscape feature and contributes to the separation of Morda from the southern edge of the town. In this context it should be noted that adjacent land is already identified for regeneration and should OSW026 come forward this would lead to an almost continuous band of development linking Morda with the south western edge of the town at English Gardens.

Land on the southern side of the valley (MORD005) forms a locally prominent shoulder of land that comprises the western end of an attractive wedge of countryside extending in towards the settlement; it contributes to the visual separation and sense of identity of Morda (the land is apparent across the valley from the southern edge of the town). The adjoining edge of the village is reasonably well integrated with the landscape. In our judgement, development within this area would cause significant harm and have an undesirable effect on the setting of the village.

The edge of the town, west of the B5069, is well defined by a belt of trees and other vegetation. This land (OSW030) together with the field to the south, forms an important break between Morda and the town; it provides a sense of separation and contributes to the setting of each settlement. The field north of the river forms an intrinsic part of the valley that separates the two built up areas.

Sloping agricultural land, comprising principally pasture fields subdivided by hedges and hedgerows containing some mature oak trees, define the south western side of Morda. Development along Trefonen Road, even though it is located on slightly higher land, is reasonably discreet on the approach from the south. The proposed replacement school site may create an opportunity for localised infill (site MORD017) and redefinition of the settlement boundary in this location without wider landscape impact. Development within site MORD001 would represent an incursion into a medium sized field to no logical boundary (the adjoining recent development follows the existing boundary hedge line).

Development within site MORD15 would represent a considerable southern extension of the settlement. It would extend development over a low rise which partially contains the land and existing settlement beyond; development would be particularly apparent on the approach to the village. The land contributes to the setting of the village and is not an appropriate location for development where better alternatives exist elsewhere.

Overall, opportunities for accommodating development within the south west quadrant appear to be very limited.

The south east (B5069/Morda to B4579)

Principal constraints in this area are:

- Green Wedge/Urban Green Net covering the south eastern fringes of the town
- Floodplain along the River Morda and tributary streams
- Industrial allocation (with provision for later expansion) at Weston Farm.

This tract of land is split into four distinct areas.

The land between the disused railway and B4579 comprises the Mile Oak industrial

estate and has not been examined as part of this study; the two brownfield sites flanking the southern side of the road (OSW025 and 051) lie within the built up area and there are no landscape constraints to their redevelopment (although refer to comment re. OSW025 below).

The other areas comprise a significant tract of agricultural land that shows distinct variations in character.

The eastern part, east of Weston Lane, comprises reasonably open flat fields principally in arable use; the area has a marked visual relationship with the adjacent industrial estate, where large industrial style buildings are visible, and locally dominant, beyond the disused railway. The area is generally well contained from the surrounding landscape by the estate, higher land and vegetation on the southern fringes of the town to the north (where there are a series of small hedgerow bounded fields and a large cemetery), and vegetation within the fields north and west of Weston Lane. This area is earmarked for phased employment development in the Local Plan, with robust landscape treatment of the western edge to enhance the sites containment.

The higher land to the north of the allocated site forms part of the Green Wedge. This contains the cemetery and a number of small grass fields and plots that were difficult to access at time of survey. Whilst some smaller plots may be capable of accommodating small developments the setting of the cemetery and the function of the land as part of the Green Wedge/Net will need to be very carefully considered to avoid incremental erosion of what is an essentially fragile landscape that contains and integrates the south eastern fringe of the town.

Land between Weston Lane and Weston Road is affected by the Morda floodplain; the northern part (north of the river) forms part of the Green Wedge. The level pasture fields, crossed by the river, are smaller and bounded by hedges, and hedgerows creating a discreet pastoral and riparian character; the urban edge is discreet with a belt of woodland containing the southern edge of the town. The river course is defined by a strong belt of trees which divides the area visually. Access to inspect the numerous individual sites was extremely limited but the overall conclusion is that this area forms an attractive fringe to the town and eastern side of Morda, and should be retained as a green wedge that would separate the new industrial development at Weston Farm. The watercourses and network of field boundaries and trees are likely to be of particular wildlife value. Furthermore, development within this tract of land is likely to lead to erosion of the separate identity of Morda.

The mainly flat land extending from the southern edge of Morda to Weston Road, lacks this level of vegetation cover with a series of low cut hedges. The land is therefore more exposed and new development in this location would be widely visible and appear as an extension into open countryside with significant effects on the landscape and views approaching the town from the south along the B5069. The unfortunate effects of the recent housing development at Parker Leighton Way on the character of the adjoining landscape and views are all too apparent. There is scope to accommodate some limited development in the western part of MORD002 and 004 with the express aim of 'healing' this edge; such development should deliver an

appropriate level of strategic planting along the new eastern fringe to improve this situation and create a long term landscaped boundary. Such development should not extend to the full width of these areas to avoid development projecting eastwards, beyond the southern edge of Morda, into the open land that is apparent in north easterly views from the B5069 south of the village.

The east (land north of B4579 Shrewsbury Road)

There appear to be no particular constraints in this area. A parcel of land east of the college (northern part of OSW052) is allocated for playing fields. Recent residential development has occurred in the north western part of this area.

The area comprises gently undulating arable and pasture fields, rising to locally higher land in the southern part. The generally medium sized fields are defined by low cut hedges and there are few trees. The area is generally well contained from the wider landscape to the east of the A5 by the linear woodland belts and hedgerows that are now well established along the road corridor, and the urban area on the other sides. Some more significant hedgerows and trees exist, notably to the north and adjacent to the college. The urban edge is prominent throughout most of this land, particularly the college, the recent residential development, and the buildings in the industrial estate south of Shrewsbury Road. Lighting is a significant feature around the northern, western and southern peripheries.

In landscape and visual terms this tract of land (OSW024) is considered suitable to accommodate a significant level of development. It is also well related to the existing urban area, employment area, and college and readily accessible from the south. It is distant from the more sensitive landscapes on the other edges of the town. As such this area represents the optimum location to accommodate significant development around the town without significant landscape or visual effects. The site represents an opportunity to create a well planned, high quality and distinctive edge to the town that reflects its important position on the entrance to the town from the east. Particular care will be needed on how development is planned on the locally higher land north west of the A5/B4579 roundabout.

Pant

The village is constrained on the western side (by ASLC; areas of nature conservation value) and eastern side (by the canal/disused railway). On the western side the land rises steeply up from the settlement edge and development opportunities appear to be extremely limited. There may be some potential for very small scale development where sites are well contained, defined by strong landscape boundaries, and where development would not effect the setting of the village or areas of nature conservation value (for example PAN001/005/part of 014). The land at PAN008 and 015 appears to have some merit in landscape terms; it appears to be reasonably contained and of shallower gradient. More extensive visual and ecological analysis would be required to evaluate the acceptability and potential of these sites.

On the southern side, site PAN003 occupies a site that is well vegetated and the loss

of vegetation, which is an intrinsic part of the settlement's character, should be resisted. PAN011 appears to be beyond the visual threshold of the village and development in this location is likely to affect the setting as well as narrow the gap between the village and Llanymynech as well as involve crossing Offa's Dyke and the Montgomery Canal. This site adjoins the sewage works which is likely to impose constraints due to odour.

Land east of the railway, at the north eastern end of the village (sites PAN010/012), is beyond the threshold of the village and would extend the village into open countryside; furthermore, access appears very constrained being limited to Penygarreg Lane and the canal Heritage Area lies adjacent to it.

The northern edge of the settlement appears to offer the best opportunity to accommodate more significant development. The southern part of PAN006 is well contained from the wider landscape by a pronounced knoll topped by woodland. Whilst this land contributes to the setting of the village on the approach from the north the southern part is generally discreet, level, and falls within the existing visual envelope of the village; as such it appears to offer the least constrained opportunity.

St. Martin's

The ASLC lies beyond the north western outskirts of the village; the land falls away to the west, across Clark's Lane, and beyond. This edge is likely to be apparent in corresponding views back towards the settlement.

Land along the southern edge falls away and contributes to the setting of the village. The southern part of the village is designated as an Area of Environmental Character. It is our view that any significant development should be avoided in this location (such as STM018, which would also extend the village edge almost up to Moors Bank).

A housing allocation remains undeveloped (Site STM005).

There appear to be opportunities to accommodate additional development in various locations:

- STM0026, adjacent to the existing undeveloped allocation (this may allow a more comprehensive proposal to come forward);
- Eastern part of STM011, adjacent to the store;
- STM030
- Southern part of STM013
- Parcels of land on the central southern side of the village, such as STM024, where these are well contained and where field boundaries could be reinforced to enhance containment

- Southern part of STM029 located on level land adjacent to the college (although this would diminish the separation between Moors Bank and St. Martin's).
- Areas to the east of Church Lane

Trefonen

The village lies within the ASLC and much of it is covered by the Policy H12 which prevents further consolidation of the generally loose knit pattern of the settlement which, together with trees within the larger plots, contributes to its hillside setting.

There are few opportunities to accommodate additional development without harm to the village's character and setting. The western part sits on south facing slopes that are apparent on the approach from that direction. Development on land to the west and south of this part of the village would have a detrimental landscape and visual impact and should be avoided. Sites TREF011 and 012 appear to be discreet parcels of land located in an area of dispersed properties where low density development could be accommodated without particular harm, although further evaluation of the visibility of these sites should be undertaken.

The village benefits from an attractive tree-lined approach from the north east, with a wedge of level land west of the road providing the foreground of views leading into the village; conversely this open land provides a strong visual relationship between the centre of the village, adjacent to the pub and church, and the outlying countryside. Development that would affect this character should be avoided (sites TRE002).

The most discreet location to accommodate a significant level of development would be in the northern part of site TRE001, where topography and trees follow the stream. The existing village edge is harsh, affecting the character of the adjoining land which falls away into a small valley; however, it is difficult to see how a suitable access could be achieved through the existing Brooklea Close estate which is only served by a cul de sac. If development were to come forward in this location it will be important to achieve an appropriate edge with the adjoining countryside.

Should this site not be able to come forward due to access constraints, the only remaining site being promoted where development could be achieved in an acceptable manner would be TREF006; however, this site is located on sloping ground and partially visible in the north east approach to the village. A low density scheme would be appropriate to allow for significant spaces between buildings and incorporation of significant trees to soften the development's appearance. Part of the site contains a section of Offa's Dyke, a Scheduled Ancient Monument

West Felton

The western part of the village (west of the A5) is defined as an Area of Environmental Character; a Registered Park and Garden lies beyond the south

eastern outskirts of the village.

The principal opportunity to accommodate significant development appears to be site WFEL020. This area comprises two arable fields subdivided partially by a belt of trees/hedgerow. The site is discreet from all directions and is only apparent from a short section of Holyhead Road passing through the village, where access would appear to be readily available off a spur road serving the new residential development at Alma Close, which occupies the south eastern part of the larger of the two fields.

Land on the eastern side of the main part of the village is not particularly well related and most of it lies beyond the principal threshold of the village. Site WFEL007 offers an opportunity for consolidation of the settlement pattern but this area contains some significant oak trees and some of the adjoining edges of the village are reasonably well integrated; the area has an almost 'village green' quality and does provide an element of separation between parts of the village, east of Holyhead Road.

Land on the southern side, east of Holyhead Road, comprises large gently sloping open arable fields and development in this location should be resisted. It would also extend the village towards the historic landscape and potentially impact on its setting. The northern part of the land between Holyhead Road and the A5 (sites WFEL008/023) is reasonably well contained and there is scope to accommodate some small scale development in this area without affecting the approach to the village; the southern 'triangle' of land should be avoided. Any allocation in this location should strengthen the tree belt/hedgerow that runs west-east across this area.

The northern edge of the village is generally well contained from the approach from that direction, with trees at Dovaston Court creating an attractive character and setting. Again, given the suitability of WFEL020, there appears to be no reason to consider extending development in this direction.

Land to the west of the A5 is unrelated and not well connected to the main part of the village to the east and has therefore not been considered given the better opportunities that would appear to exist there. Furthermore, the whole of this part of the village is defined as an Area of Environmental Character indicating a level of sensitivity that does not occur in the village to the west.

Weston Rhyn

The western edge of the village abuts the ASLC, whilst a flood zone runs up to a small part of the southern edge.

Housing allocations have now been developed north and west of Ashlands Road.

There are a number of opportunities to accommodate additional housing on the northern and southern sides of the village if required. However, particular attention should be given to (a) developing to logical existing field boundaries, and (b) creating

strategic landscape edges to new development to create a landscape framework and minimise the impact of development on the outlying countryside. The significant woodland belt that runs west-east to the north of the village provides significant containment from the wider area beyond to the north.

Site WRN006 is part of a larger field and is poorly related to the settlement pattern; development should be avoided in this location. Development in this location may also impact on the setting of the church.

Land on the eastern side of the village, between the village and the railway line, whilst discreet from the wider area does provide a physical gap, and a sense of separation, between the village and development at Rhoswel to the east of the railway.

Whittington

The south west boundary of the village generally abuts the railway line. There is a small area of development over the railway line along Station Road within close proximity to Park Hall but an agricultural field and County Council depot prevent these properties coalescing with the adjacent built-up area.

The development boundary of the quadrant between the railway line and Whittington Road is clearly defined by the Castle (Grade I listed). Any development between the castle and the raised embankment of the disused railway line to the north should be avoided to preserve the setting of the historic building.

Towards the north east development stretches along Ellesmere Road. The character of the area becomes very rural beyond the current development boundary and relates poorly to the village. This is exaggerated by sloping topography to the south east and extensive views across agricultural fields.

It is anticipated that access restrictions would prevent further significant development to the North of Top Street.

Much of the more recent development has taken place to the south and south east of the village. The land is generally low lying and less visible than other parts of the village with the primary school playing fields also contributing to the more urban feel of this location.