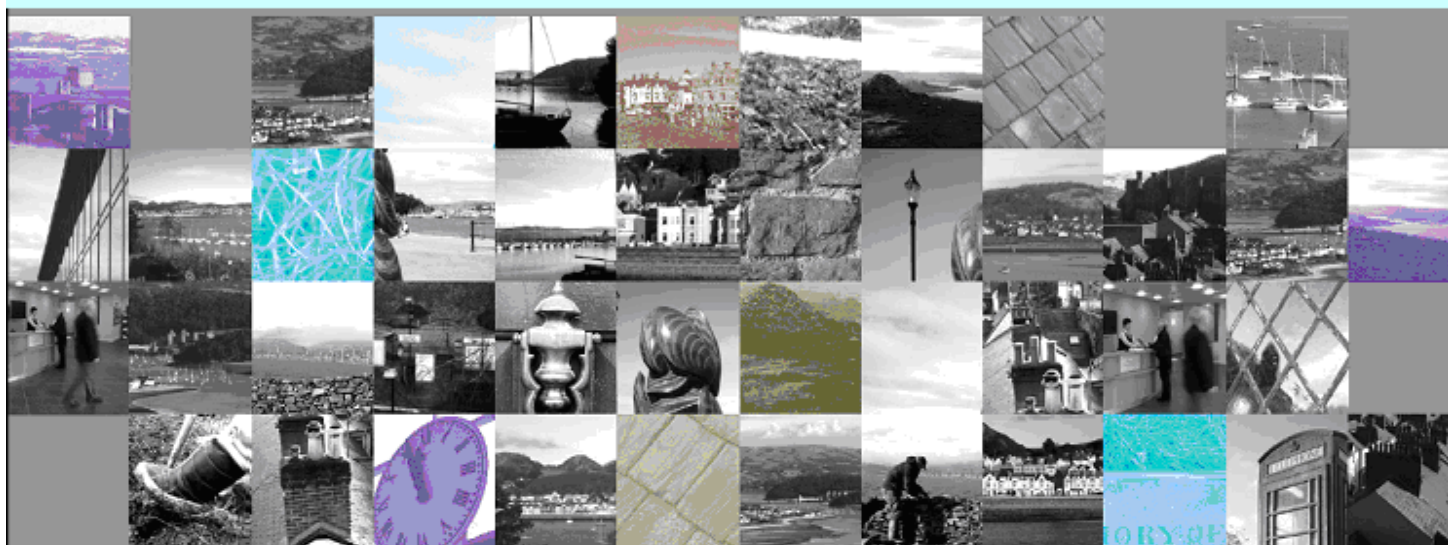


Conwy Deposit Local Development Plan 2007 – 2022 (Revised edition 2011)



REVISED BACKGROUND PAPER 27 – SUBMISSION

Special Landscape Areas

August 2012

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Glossary of Terms

BP	Background Paper
CCB	Conwy County Borough
CCW	Countryside Council for Wales
LCA	Landscape Conservation Area
LDP	Local Development Plan
PPW	Planning Policy Wales, 2011
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SLA	Special Landscape Area
SNPA	Snowdonia National Park Authority
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
WG	Welsh Government

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper is one of a series of background papers accompanying the Revised Deposit Local Development Plan (LDP) document. When publishing the LDP the Council must also explain how the policy has been formulated based on the evidence base available to the Council at the time. This background paper sets out the reasoning and justification for the Special Landscape Area (SLA) designations detailed under Policy NTE/5 and shown on the Proposals Map.
- 1.2 This Background Paper (BP) provides an overview of processes involved in identifying the SLAs using LANDMAP within the Plan Area and the reasoning and justification for the criteria set out in Policy NTE/5 of the LDP
- 1.3 LANDMAP is the name given to a computer based landscape assessment and decision making process devised by the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) and the Wales Landscape Partnership Group (which comprises of the main local government bodies in Wales from local and central levels). LANDMAP stands for Landscape Assessment and Decision Making Process, and is designed to assist decision making over a range of disciplines, for example, development planning and development control, environmental enhancement, biodiversity, forestry and rural development. There are five evaluated aspect layers which comprise the full set of LANDMAP information. These are:

Visual and Sensory: This aspect layer identifies those landscape qualities that are perceived through the senses. It deals with the individual physical attributes of landform and land cover, as well as their visual patterns of distribution and sensory characteristics, and the relationships between them in a particular area.

Landscape Habitats: This aspect layer looks at the distribution of vegetation and habitats and the basis for landscape ecology.

Cultural Landscape: This aspect layer considers the relationship that exists between people and places; how people have given meaning to places, how the landscape has shaped their actions and their actions have shaped the landscape.

Geological Landscape: This aspect layer studies the geology, geomorphology and hydrology of Conwy.

Historic Landscape: This aspect layer focuses on how archaeological and historical sites relate to each other and to the surrounding landscape.

The practice of evaluating landscape character through the LANDMAP has evolved via a nationally consistent dataset covering five Evaluated Aspects and involves the following steps:

- Step 1:** Classifying and mapping distinct Aspect Areas
- Step 2:** Completing a detailed data capture form for each Aspect Area identified through desk and field work as appropriate
- Step 3:** Preparation of an accompanying Technical Report
- Step 4:** Submission for Quality Assurance assessment to ensure consistency and accuracy (for studies based upon the 2003 methodology update)

- 1.4 The Evaluated Aspect layers allow recognizable landscape character areas to be identified throughout Wales, with recommendations made to manage and enhance the rich and varied landscape heritage in an appropriate way for the future. It is the use of all five layers of information that promotes sustainable landscape decision-making as what may be less important to in one particular layer may be of high importance in another. As advised by the CCW, it is vital that all five layers are given equal consideration to ensure no aspect of the landscape is overlooked.
- 1.5 Within the Conwy borough area Landscape Character Areas were included in the Colwyn Borough Local Plan, Llandudno/Conwy District Plan, Gwynedd Structure Plan and draft Unitary Development Plan with the intention of adding further weight to the protection of the undeveloped rural areas. In all of these plans the Character Areas covered all of the plan area outside of the defined settlement boundaries. There is no evidence of landscape value for each of the former character areas but each has since been used in the decision making process.
- 1.6 LANDMAP offers an evidence base from which to identify SLAs and as a basis for landscape impact assessments. LANDMAP as a mapping system, allows information about landscape to be gathered, organised and evaluated into a nationally consistent data set. Information is collected in a structured and rigorous way that aims to be as objective as possible. Its database contains both relatively objective information, such as rock type and historical information, and more subjective information, such as sensory responses and cultural interpretation.

LANDMAP information can also be combined with contextual socio-economic information.

- 1.7 The use of non-statutory designations to protect areas of landscape, such as SLAs has long been a policy tool within the UK planning system. They are seen as a means of protecting sensitive landscapes and in developing an understanding and awareness of those features and characteristics that give local areas a sense of place.
- 1.8 Planning Policy Wales in paragraph 9.3.13 supports the use of LANDMAP as a basis for landscape assessment covering local distinctiveness, SLAs and design. It is considered that in defining SLAs using LANDMAP new development and design can be controlled accordingly through a combination of related policies and other landscape considerations.
- 1.9 All five Evaluated Aspect layers for Conwy have been completed to the latest CCW methodology 2003 (see <http://www.ccw.gov.uk/landscape--wildlife/protecting-our-landscape/landmap/landmap-methodology.aspx>). The recommendations made under each of the Evaluated Aspect layers are the views of the specialists who compiled the information contained within those layers and represent the designated areas identified on the Conwy revised deposit LDP. Policy NTE/5, and the requirement on developers to produce a LANDMAP Assessment, where appropriate, provides the appropriate mechanisms to protect and, enhance the high and outstanding landscape areas in Conwy identified through the SLA designating process.

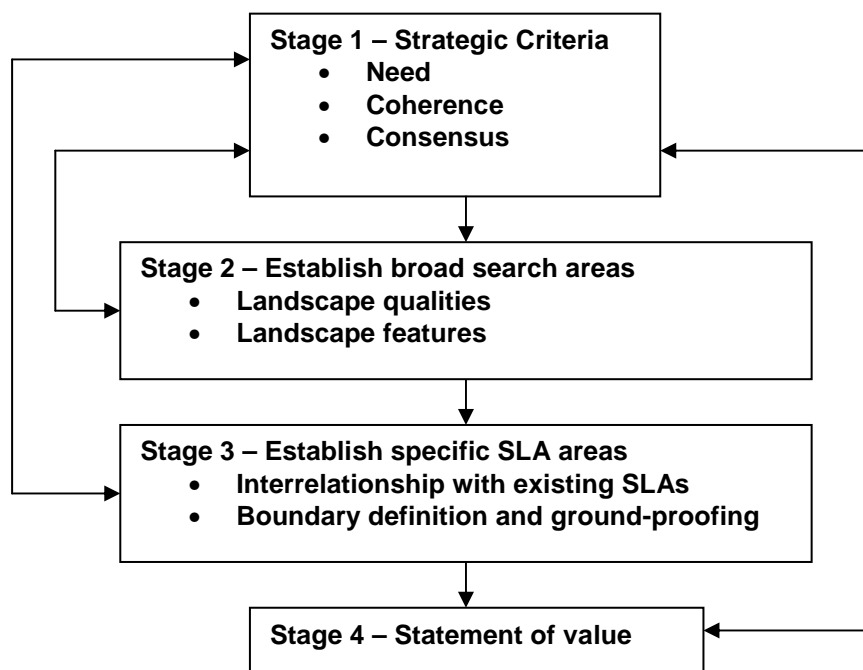
2. The Process of identifying SLAs in the Plan Area

- 2.1 CCW advises that “a SLA may be designated for one or more reasons but the role of the SLA must be clearly aligned with the original need for the SLA in order to fulfil the objective of the designation. It is important that the role of a SLA has been carefully considered in conjunction with what a LPA is trying to achieve with its other policies”.

2.2 Potential roles of SLAs are considered to:

- Raise understanding and recognition of locally valued landscapes important for their distinctive character, qualities and sense of place.
- An additional development control measure specific to landscape protection where the objectives for an SLA could be used as a primary reason for refusal for inappropriate developments.
- To influence positive landscape planning within the SLA. For example to produce design guidance for developments to be in keeping with or enhance landscape character or to target grants towards conservation of special landscape features.

Fig 1. CCW model for identifying potential SLAs using LANDMAP



2.3 Stage 1 - Review of Strategic Criteria

The Council has already consulted on an approach in the Revised LDP during March-April 2011. There was only one representation to the Revised Deposit LDP in May 2011 and only two to the Deposit LDP in 2009 which related to Policy NTE/5. The objection raised was due to a lack of clarity and evidence. This triggered a new approach to using the same LANDMAP evidence as a basis to justify clear and defined SLAs therefore it is considered much more sound, informed, and robust than the previous method.

Strategic Criteria	Response
1) Need - to what extent will the designation be more effective in safeguarding, managing or providing the special attributes of the area	<p>Currently the LPA assesses development using 3 adopted plans covering different areas. These plans contain SLAs or LCAs covering the whole plan area. This results in a devalued designation.</p> <p>The LDP is at a point which allows a review of this approach and incorporation of LANDMAP as an evidence source from which to identify more meaningful SLAs. Cross-referencing to other LDP policies and design guidance will also improve clarity of information for all parties.</p>
2) Coherence - ensure that areas considered for designation make it practical to develop policies for its protection, management or promotion.	It is acknowledged that the current areas are too large and each so vague as to mean the same thing in each respective plan area. Accurate identification of landscape values will enable the Council to control development and to make it more responsive where needed. Using LANDMAP adds clarity and transparency to the whole process.
3) Consensus - agreement and sufficient support for designation, and must include all stakeholders including community as well as professional groups.	The LDP process ensures that a wide range of groups are consulted. There was only 1 representation to the Revised Deposit LDP in May 2011 and only 2 to the Deposit LDP in 2009 which related to Policy NTE/5. The objections raised were related to a lack of clarity and evidence base.
Conclusions and recommendations	
The existing SLAs or LCAs do not make a positive contribution to the Councils design objectives in designating vast areas. There is little differentiation or evidence behind the designation. LANDMAP offers an opportunity to review and inform the approach and improve the clarity and justification behind such designations. It also provides information to all parties and opportunities to explore/assess further the impacts development will have in various locations and what will be expected in terms of avoidance or design mitigation.	

2.4 Assessing *need* is identified as a Strategic Criteria in Stage 1 of the model to distinguish potential SLAs. SLAs can be reviewed and reassessed against need at stages 2 and 3. Need must relate to purpose, but need may vary between authorities, as may *purpose* between SLAs. Within a SLA the conservation of the visual, ecological, historic, cultural and geological landscape must be the primary consideration or purpose. Identification of a valid, defensible and clearly justified need for a SLA is paramount to an effective designation.

2.5 The following questions should be asked when assessing need:

- Are normal countryside development controls and design policies adequate to protect the character and features that make the landscape special?

- If a need is identified for added landscape protection, what will the SLA offer in addition to Town and Country Planning Policies?
- What would be the added value? Are SLAs robust and justifiable in relation to other policies within an authority? Can existing SLAs still be justified?
- Is the SLA locally distinct enough to be included in the Local Development Plan?

Authorities should determine what guidance will accompany the designation.

CCW Examples of potential circumstances resulting in a need for a SLA Identification for protection of intrinsic value

Need
A locally important landscape has visual, cultural, historical, geological or ecological characteristics and qualities of such significance in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a Special Landscape Area. No statutory landscape designations protect the landscape yet evidence from a landscape assessment justifies the requirement of effective protection to safeguard the locally important and locally valued landscape characteristics and qualities.
A particular landscape type is locally or regionally rare. There is therefore a requirement to safeguard the conservation of a landscape of notable rarity that adds to local or regional distinctiveness and diversity.
An opportunity to safeguard a locally significant landscape valued for its proximity to settlements and is therefore under pressure for development. The landscape in question has a limited capacity for change or further cumulative change without significantly deteriorating in character, quality and therefore local landscape value.
A locally important landscape has its own significant visual, cultural, historical, geological or ecological characteristics and qualities but would also protect the settings and views to and from other statutory landscape designations and would therefore contribute to and enhance the landscape policies of an adjacent designation.
Need for clarity in policy constraints
A Special Landscape Designation is required to focus planning policy objectives, identify policy constraints relevant to a particular area and to give greater weight to landscape considerations in decision making. Where appropriate, the SLA designation should be a material consideration for refusal of planning applications. Clarity must be given as to why a SLA designation could be used as a basis to refuse a proposal in addition to existing policies.
The range and purpose of other designations does not duplicate the SLA designation. The scope of existing designations and existing open countryside and development control policies is deemed to not adequately protect/enhance landscape interests. The designation of areas as SLAs adds extra protection/guidance/information. However, SLAs should not be designated to prevent a perceived threat of development when other planning policies (e.g. green belt/wedges) may be more appropriate.
To highlight to decision makers the need for landscape change that is in keeping with the distinctive local landscape character and qualities, thereby safeguarding distinctiveness and landscape value whilst allowing appropriate change.
To produce policy guidance for an SLA that is clear and easily conveys a landscape's special characteristics, qualities and local value without the need for specialist knowledge thereby making it easily understood by planning officers,

developers and land managers (agriculture and forestry).
Focused Management and Promotion
The SLA designation is intended to raise awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool for targeted landscape management guidelines and grant bids.
Raise awareness and recognition for valued landscapes outside of nationally designated areas.
Development proposals can benefit from design guidance that is produced for an SLA to enhance development quality and to encourage developments that are in keeping with local character.
For some authorities, it may be found that SLAs are not the most appropriate course as they may be difficult to distinguish from the wider landscape or that a clear, robust and defensible need can not be established. In these circumstances the whole landscape policy approach underpinned by criteria based policies may be more appropriate. Likewise if the coverage of other statutory national designations is significant within an authority, careful consideration must be given as to whether it is appropriate to add more designations.
Coherence
<p>A SLA will be designated for its intrinsic value; as such the size, scale and boundaries will be determined by the landscape character displaying the values for which it is designated. There is no minimum size. However, the area that is designated must be large enough to allow landscape policy and management objectives to be developed and fulfilled. In some SLAs, a coherent and defensible boundary for an SLA may encompass <i>small</i> parts of the local landscape that does not display the same high landscape importance. It is the prerogative of the local planning authority to make the decision to include areas of lower landscape importance as long as a clear and defensible justification is made, and can be made at an Inquiry, and they form a <i>minority</i> part of the SLA. Circumstances when this may occur may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To include an integral area of similar topography or land cover that could be enhanced • A proportionately small area of active mineral or other workings that could be restored to a high quality landscape • A SLA is identified across an adjacent local authority boundary and a case can be made for continuity including provision for landscape improvement of the “mutually shared” landscape. <p>In some instances, there may be a part of the landscape that is significantly affected by existing or planned new development or is characterised by significant detractors or damage so that a case may be made to exclude the area from the SLA.</p>

Consensus

- 2.6 Consultation on the LDP or other Landscape Policy Plans provides the opportunity for input into the SLA designation. The LANDMAP approach includes opportunities for participation and input from professionals and stakeholders through the consultation and discussion. Local communities could potentially input through the

LANDMAP public perception studies. These studies can help identify what is considered to be of local importance and in identifying a sense of place/identity.

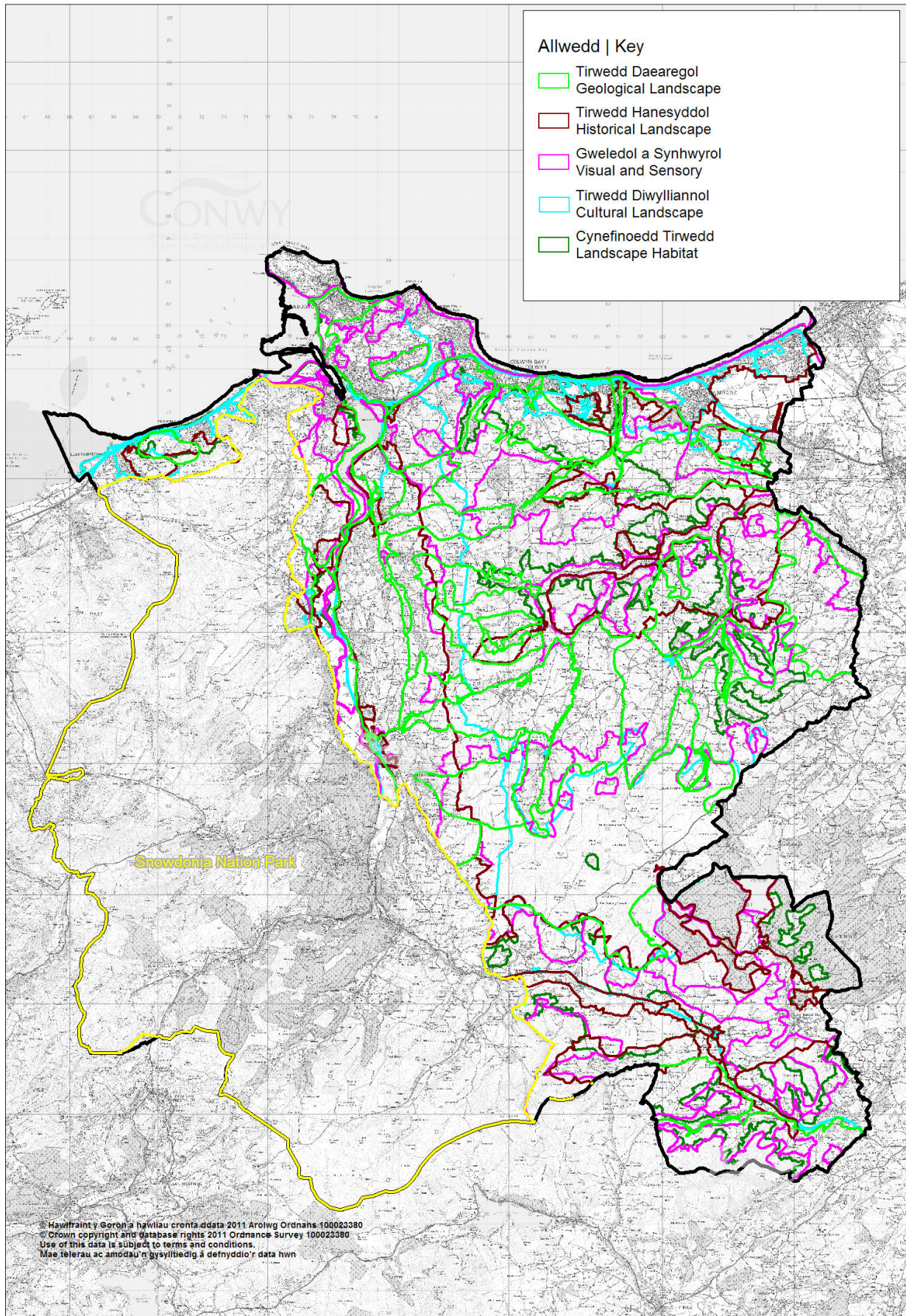
Where need is clearly identified and coherence and consensus taken into account, the following sections will guide the Council through the identification and justification of a SLA.

Stage 2 - Establishing broad areas of search

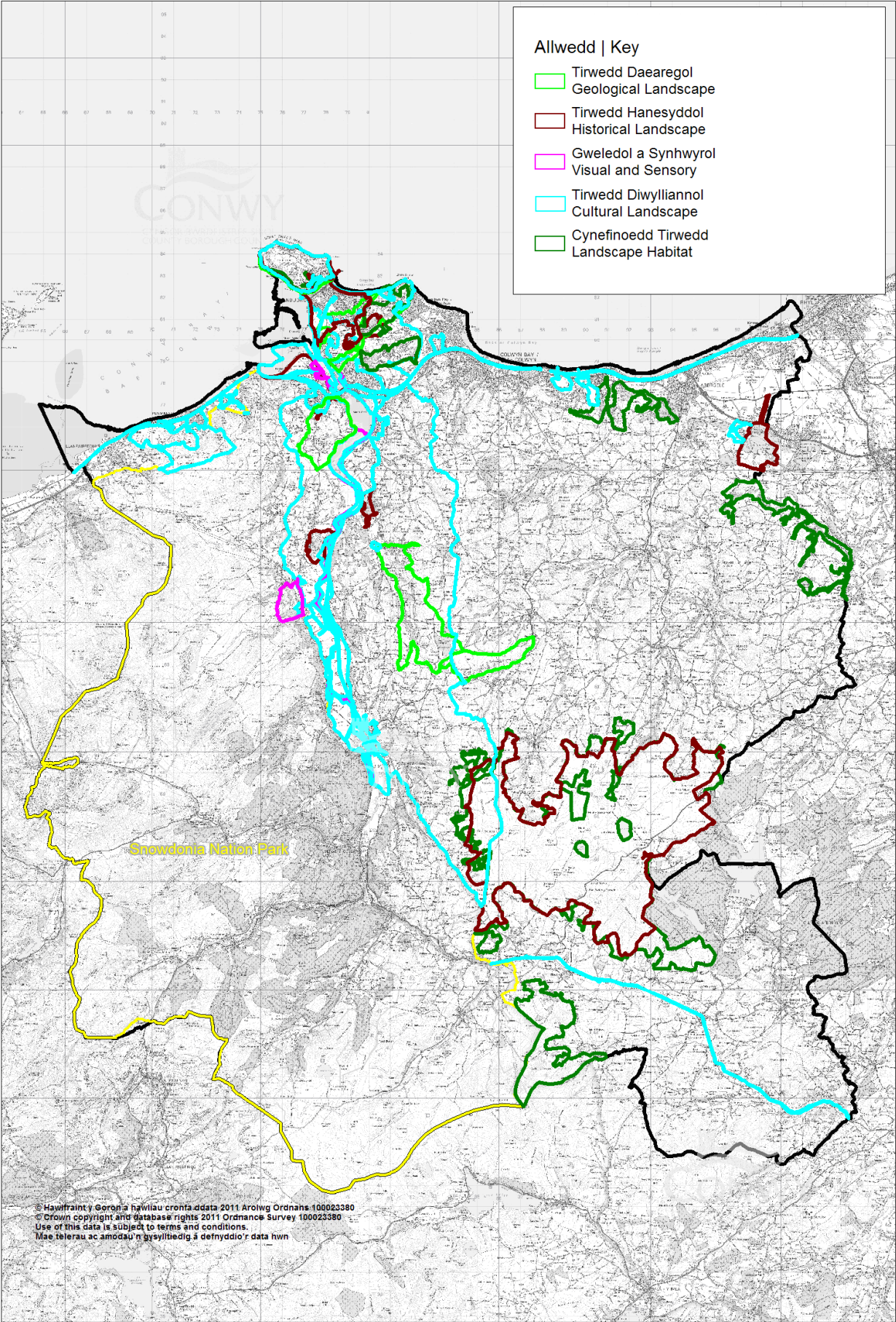
- 2.7 The broad search areas were established through a desk-based review and analysis of the LANDMAP information system data. This involved an iterative review process by adding the 5 aspect layers and identifying 'hot spots' where several high and outstanding aspects occur. The boundaries identified cover a broad appreciation and allow for fine tuning of the specific SLAs at the next stage.

The following mapping sections show the process and methodology taken in looking at each aspect value first and then overlaying to identify the key areas of multi-layering.

Map 1. County showing all high layers



Map 2. County showing all outstanding layers

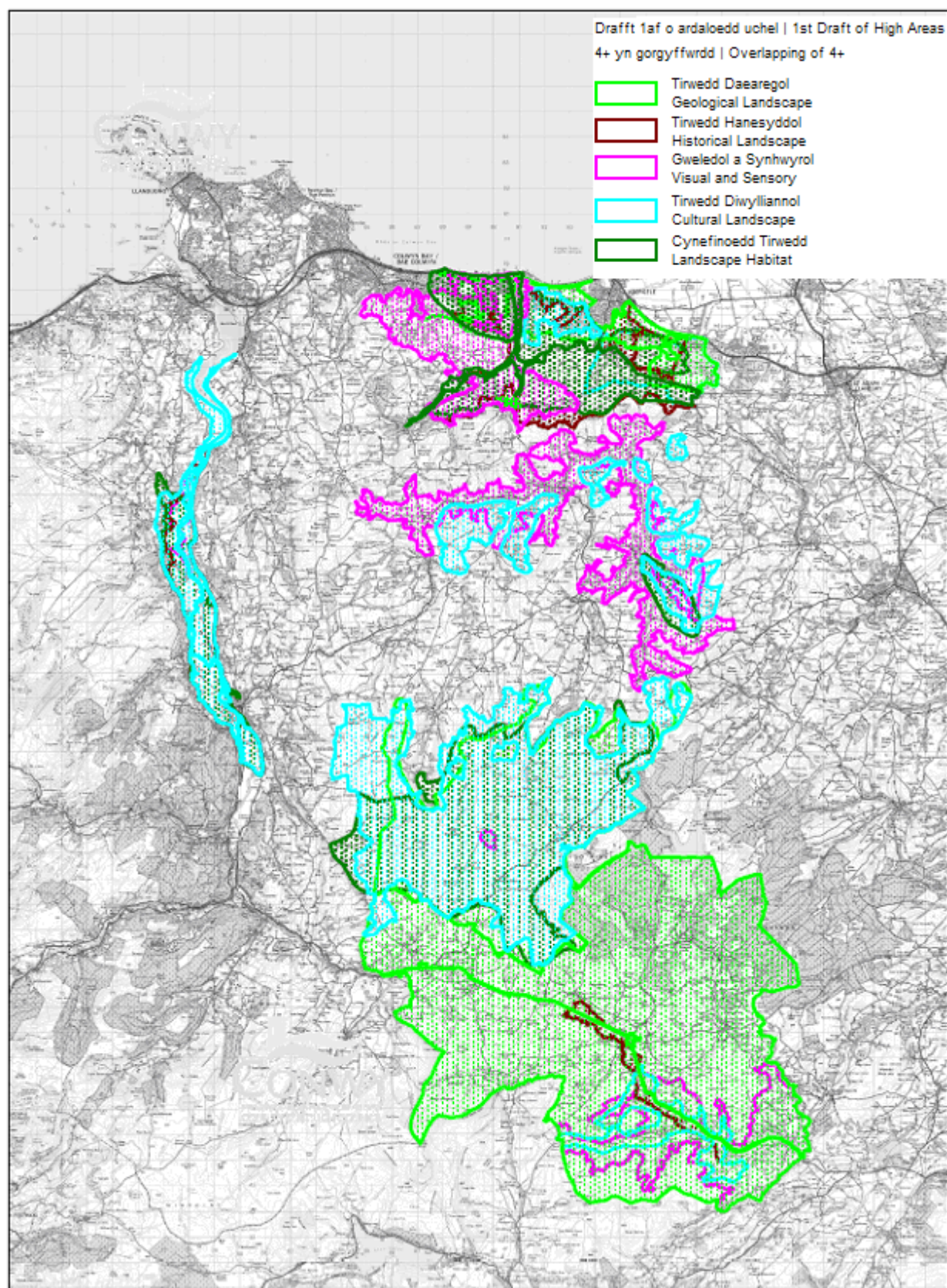


- 2.8 There is little guidance on how many layers of each aspect justify the designation of an SLA although much will depend on the areas covered and local context. However the greater the concentration of layers; the stronger the rationale there is in designating an SLA. Conversely, the fewer the number of layers; the greater justification needed to designate. The Plan area is almost wholly covered by high value layers (see Fig.2), predominantly in the cultural aspect layer. Therefore, to avoid devaluing of the whole area it is proposed to identify all those areas with 4 or more 'high' value aspects and/or all those with 1 or more 'outstanding' value aspects unless other concentrations of layers are identified. This identifies hot-spots of multi-layering and greater value in landscape character. These areas are also definable and consist of a suitable size to justify protection.

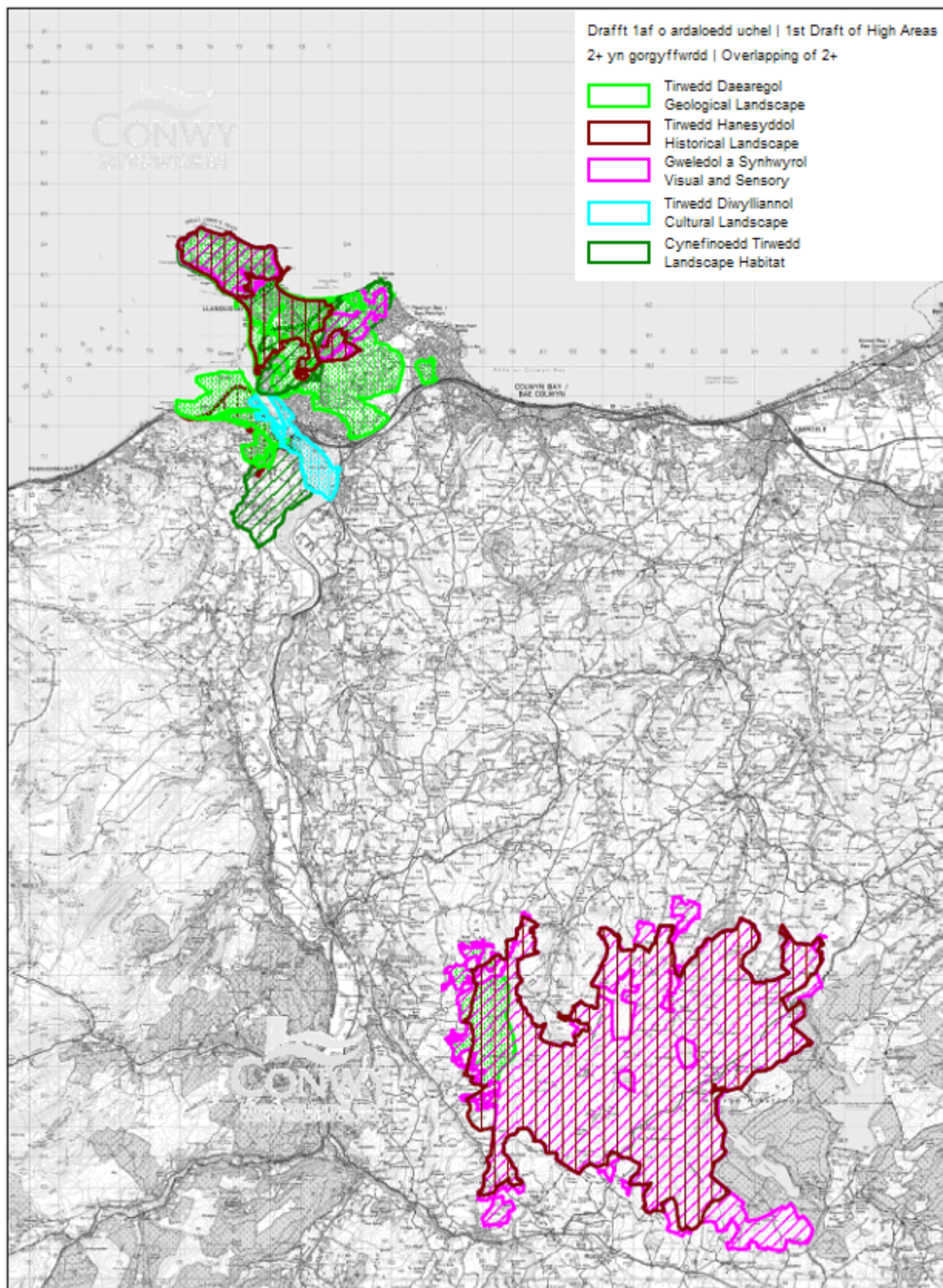
Stage 3- Establishing the specific SLAs

- 2.9 The primary function of this stage is to review the broad search areas and establish clear, definable boundaries for the SLAs. This has been undertaken through a desk-top survey supported by a multi-layer mapping exercise

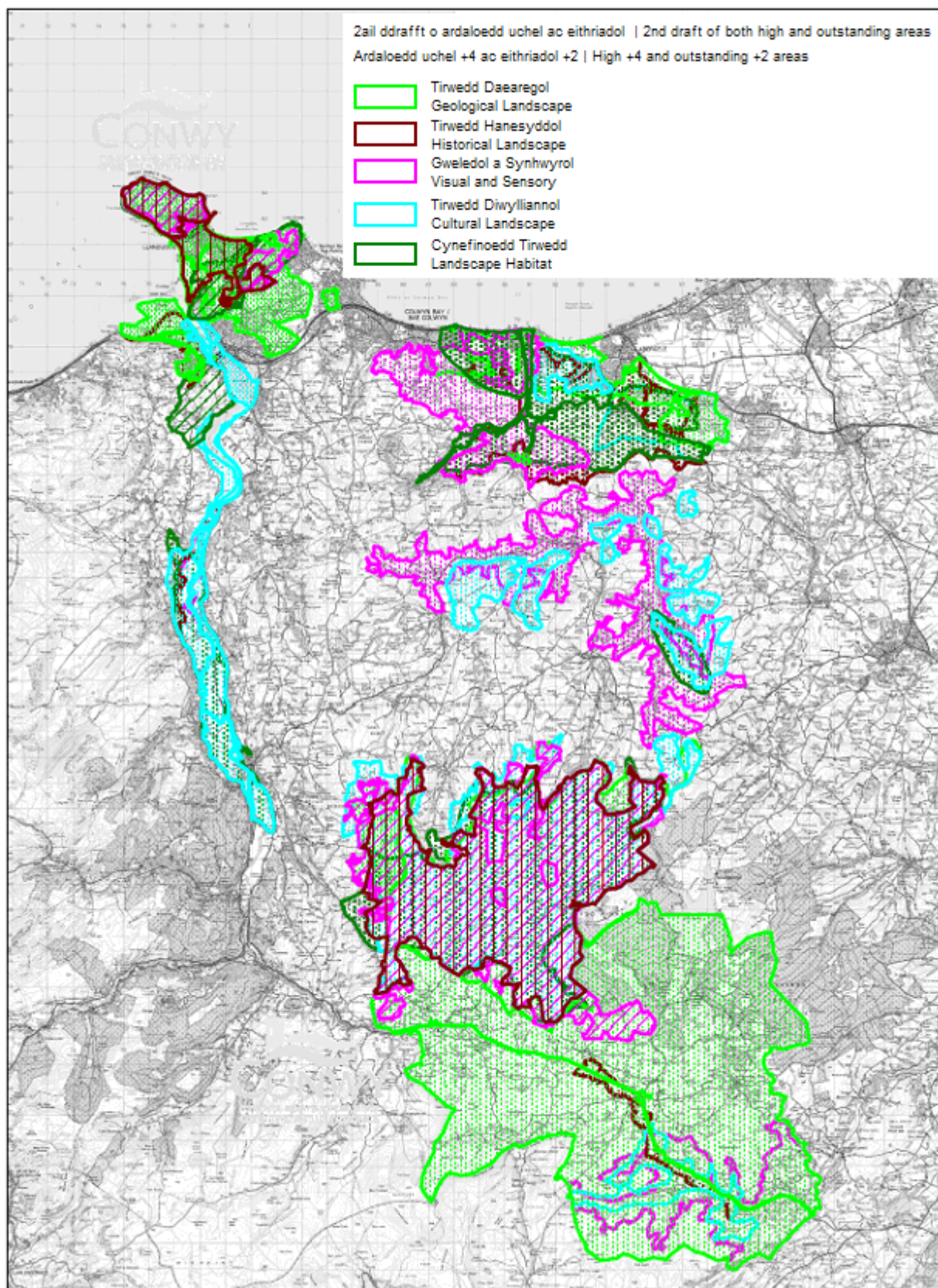
Map 3. County showing 4+ high layer zones



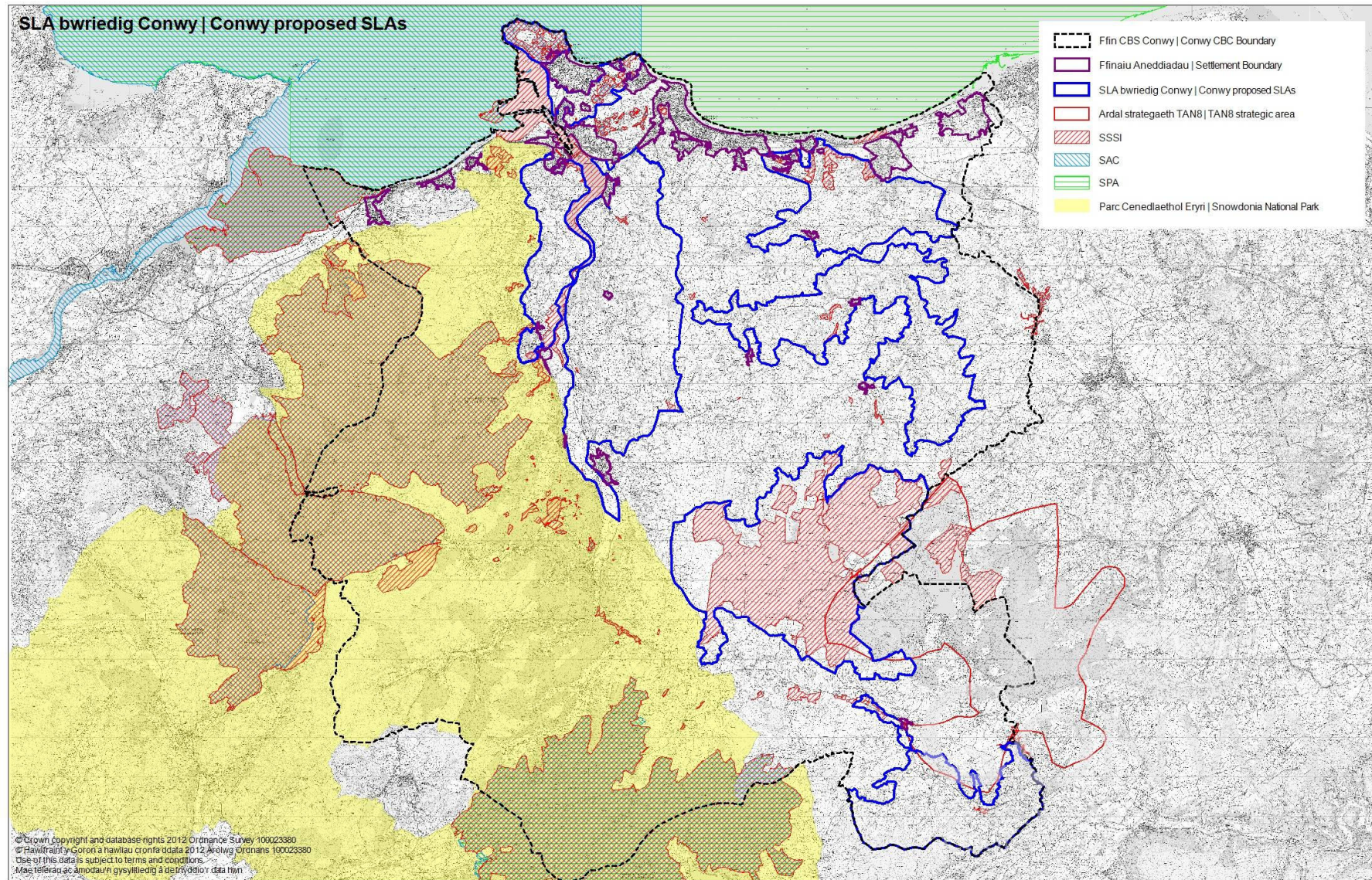
Map 4. County showing 2+ outstanding layer zones



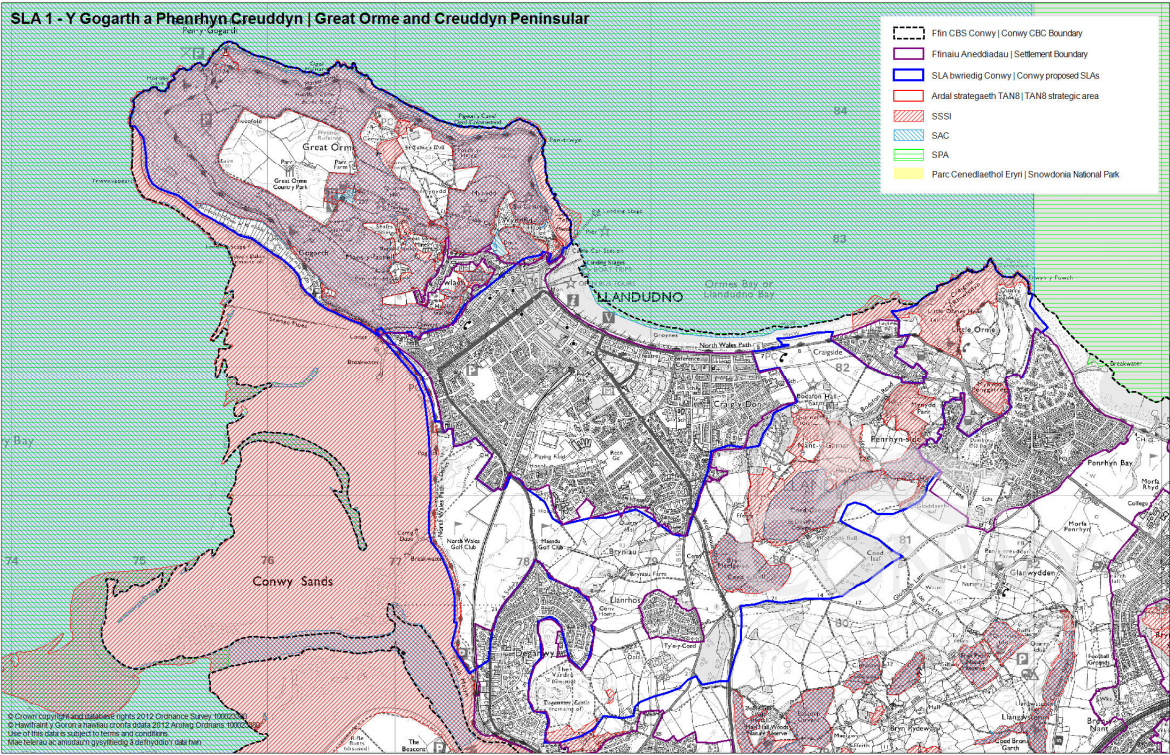
Map 5. County showing both high and outstanding combined layers (SLAs)



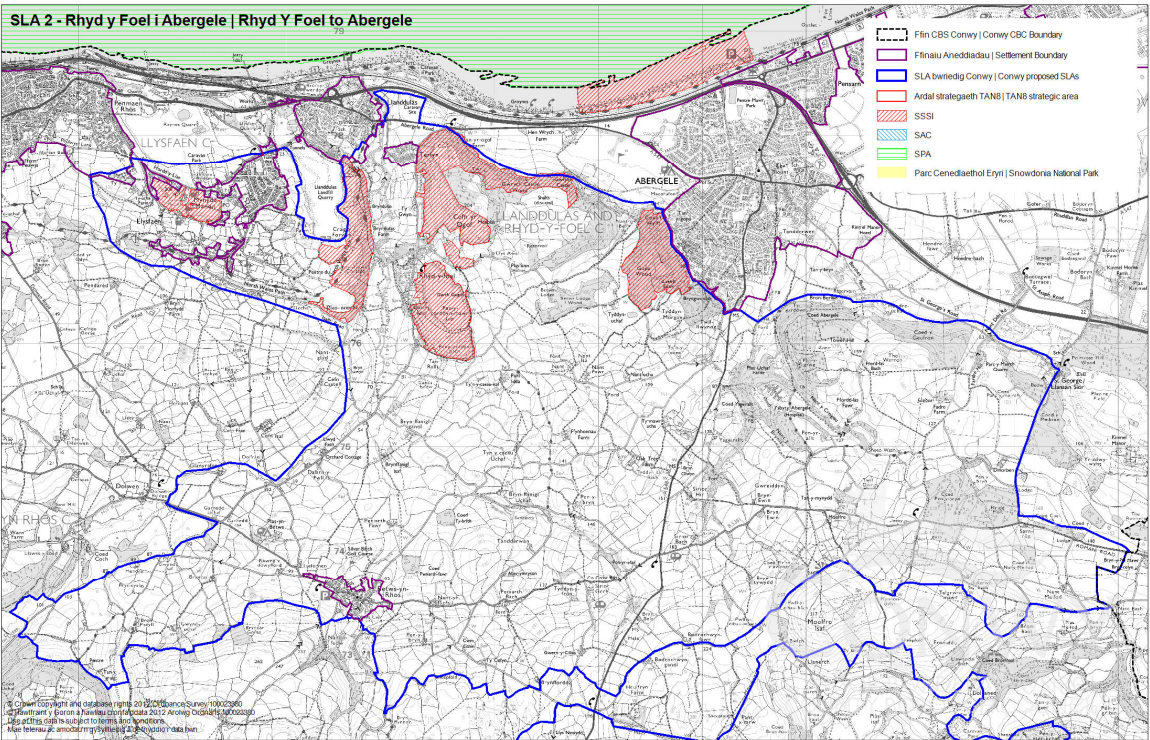
Map 6. County showing Proposed SLAs



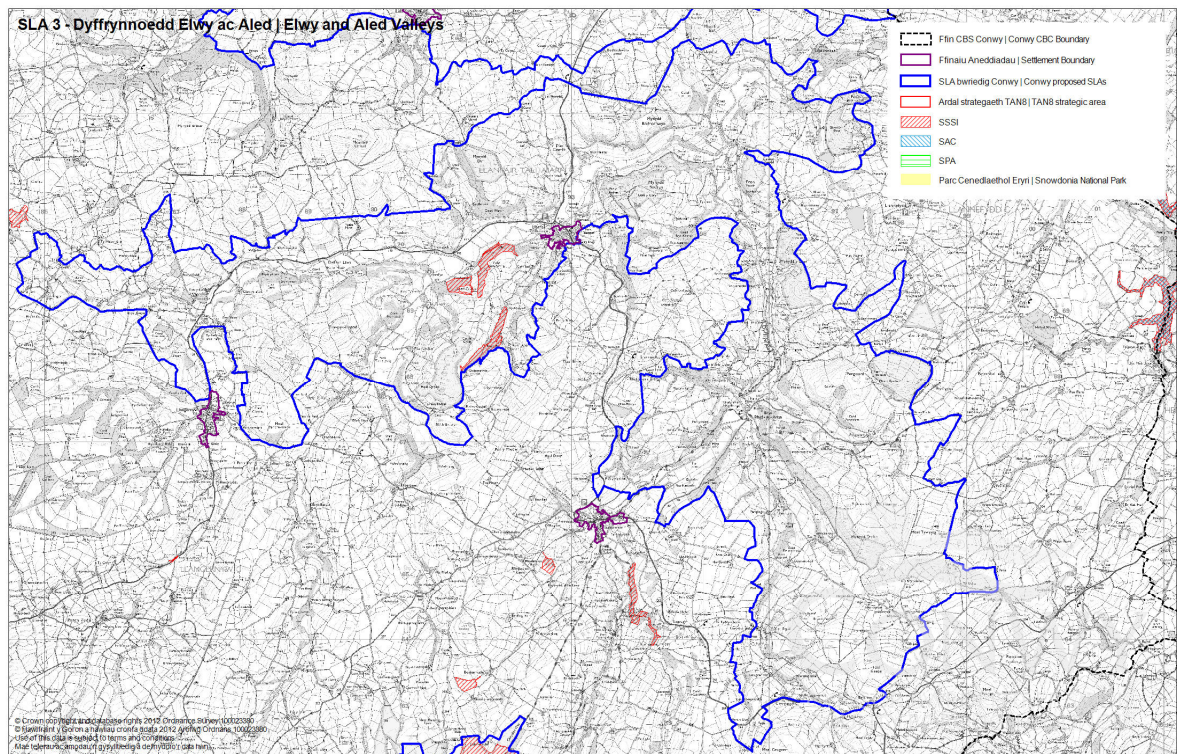
Map 7



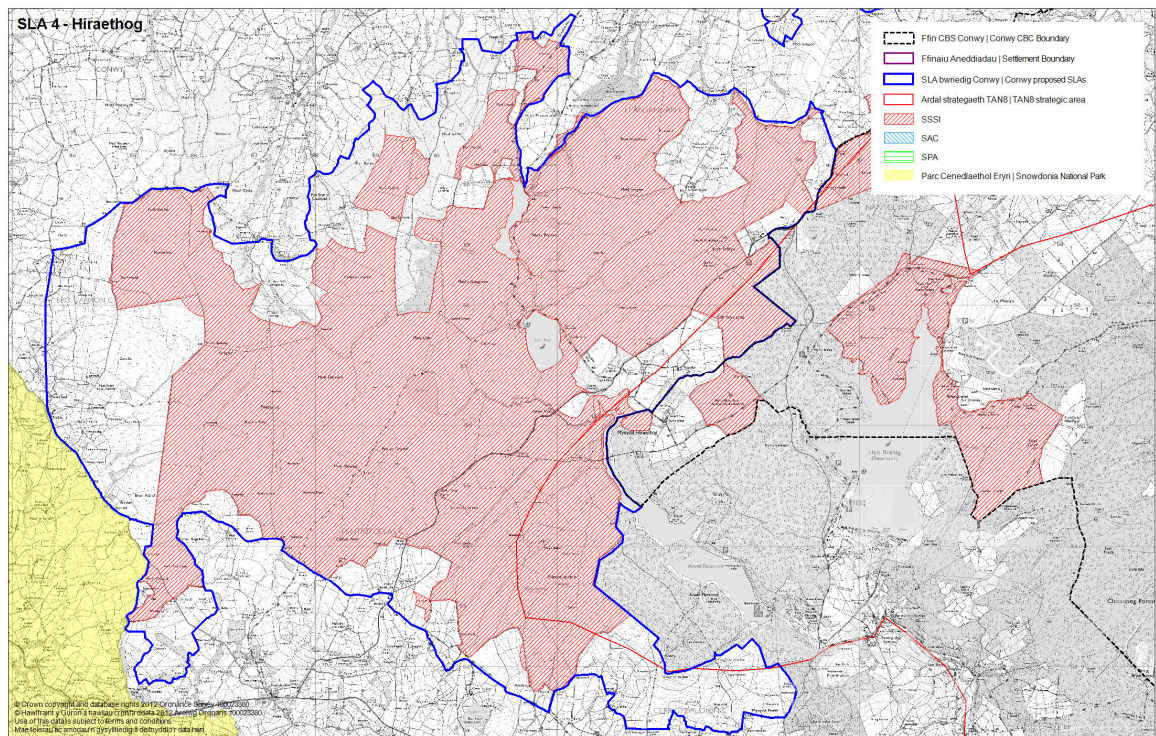
Map 8



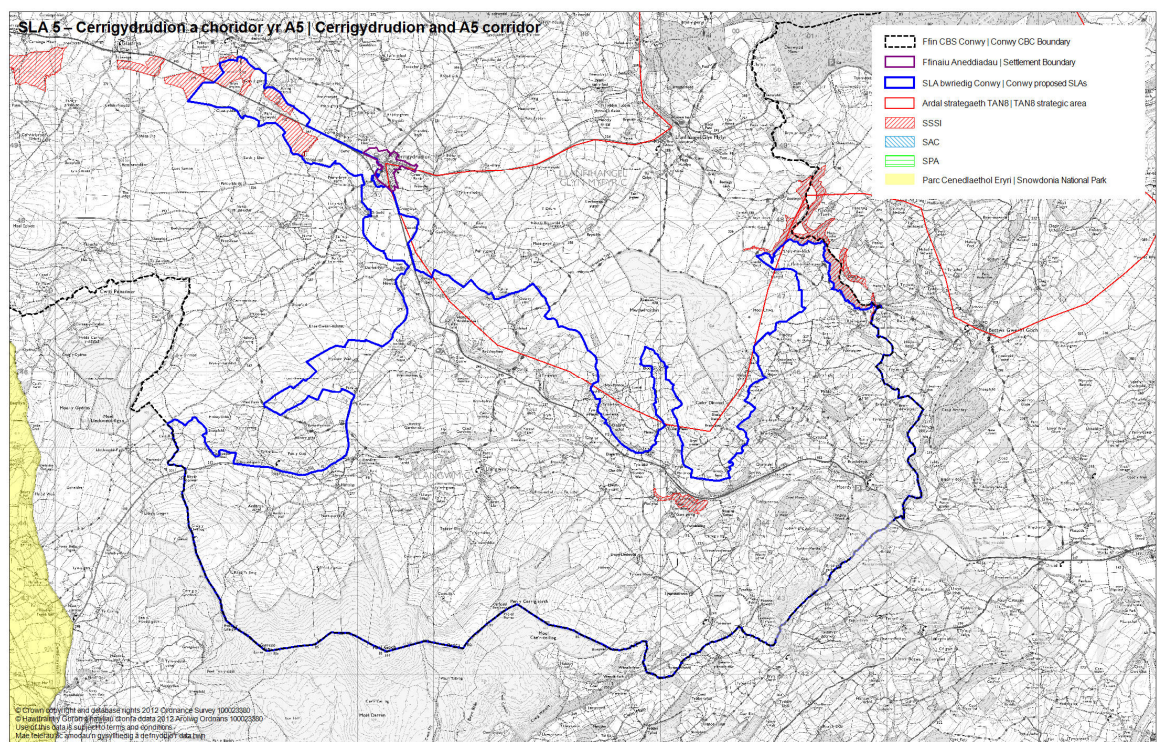
Map 9



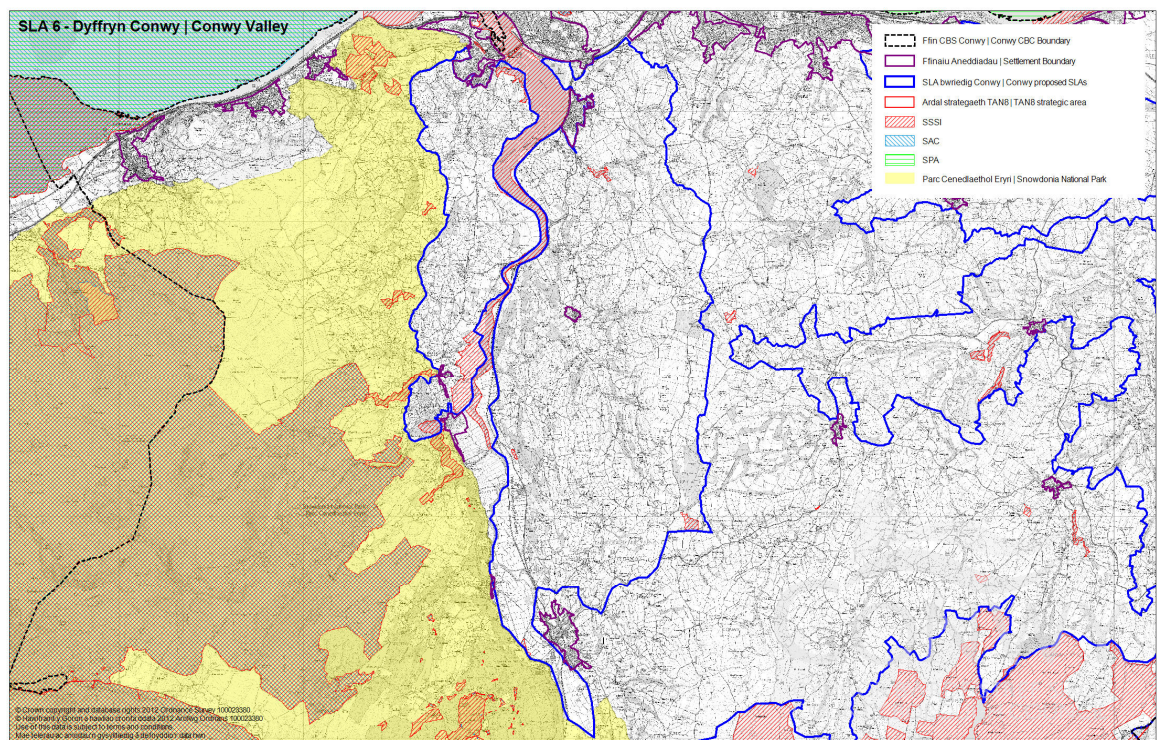
Map 10



Map 11



Map 12



Stage 4- Statement of Value

2.10 This stage requires that a statement of value is prepared to the format shown in 2.5 for each SLA identified. The late stage of this refinement allows the Council to dovetail the SLAs with other LDP designations and allocations to provide a current, sound, and meaningful policy approach to its SLAs and related policies.

2.11 The areas designated as SLAs are:

1) Great Orme and Creuddyn Peninsular

2) Rhyd-y-Foel to Abergele

3) Elwy and Aled Valleys

4) Hiraethog

5) Cerrigydrudion and the A5 corridor

6) Conwy Valley

3. Justification for each SLA

3.1 Great Orme and Creuddyn Peninsular

Need

The area is a locally important landscape and comprises 4 outstanding layers and two high so is of such significance in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a Special Landscape Area. There are other European designations including the Great Orme SAC, the Creuddyn Peninsular Woods SAC and areas of SSSI but the Council considers effective protection of areas surrounding the SACs as locally important landscape and complimentary to those other designations. The areas outside of the settlement boundaries have also been defended from infill and sporadic development which could be more difficult to defend with no SLA or similar designation.

The landscape type is both locally and regionally rare. There is therefore a requirement to safeguard the conservation of a landscape of notable rarity that adds to local or regional distinctiveness and diversity.

Designating as a SLA provides an opportunity to safeguard a locally significant landscape valued for its proximity to Llandudno. The area is under pressure from sporadic infill development and sub-standard of design but the landscape has a limited capacity for change or further cumulative change without significantly deteriorating the character and quality of the landscape.

The Great Orme and Creuddyn Peninsular has its own significant visual, cultural, historical, geological and ecological characteristics and qualities so a designation would also protect the settings and views to and from other statutory landscape designations and would therefore contribute to and enhance the landscape policies of an adjacent designation.

Need for clarity in policy constraints

Designating the area as SLA will focus planning policy objectives and identify policy constraints in the area. Currently the Llandudno/Conwy District Plan 1982 is used in the development control process. In it is a Landscape Conservation Area covering everywhere outside of the designated settlement boundaries. The proposed SLA will offer more focus on landscape protection and would be a material consideration for refusal of planning applications.

The SLA is in keeping with the distinctive local landscape character and qualities and will aid with safeguarding distinctiveness and landscape value whilst allowing appropriate change to be made.

Focused Management and Promotion

The SLA designation raises awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool and that specific guidance can be formed to inform future development proposals. It also raises awareness and recognition for a valued landscape within an area already identified as an important for its ecological value.

Coherence

Then area is based upon a distinct geological feature and its surrounds and the area will form the basis of specific design guidance. This SLA comprises the following LANDMAP fabric:

High:

Geological Landscape: CNWGL010

Visual and Sensory: CNWVS022, CNWVS063

Outstanding:

Historic Landscape: CNWHL027, CNWHL054, CNWHL065

Geological Landscape: CNWGL011, CNWGL014, CNWGL013

Landscape Habitat: CNWLH017, CNWLH021, CNWLH026

Cultural Landscape: CNWCL008, CNWCL010, CNWCL016

3.2 Abergele hinterland

Need

The area is a locally important landscape and has visual, cultural and landscape habitat characteristics and qualities of such concentration and significance in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a SLA. The area consists of several high aspect layers in an obvious concentration so there is a requirement to safeguard the conservation of a landscape of notable rarity that adds to local or regional distinctiveness and diversity. The Council considers effective protection of the area as locally important and complimentary to those other designations such as SSSIs and RIGS. These areas have also been defended from infill and sporadic encroachment into the rural hinterland in such close proximity from the coast urban area. Without a SLA or similar recognition the area would be classed as open countryside and assessed by a criteria based policy. Designating as a SLA provides an opportunity to safeguard the area as a locally significant landscape valued for its under-development and proximity to the coastal urban belt. The landscape in question has a limited capacity for change or further cumulative change without significantly deteriorating in character or quality and therefore is of high local landscape value.

Need for clarity in policy constraints

A special landscape designation is required to focus planning policy objectives, identify policy constraints relevant to the area and to give greater weight to landscape considerations in decision making. The SLA designation will be a material consideration for refusal of planning applications. and adds greater weight in being able to defend the area from inappropriate development in an area regularly challenged by development due to its rural appeal whilst only a short distance away from key links along the urbanised coastal belt.

Focused Management and Promotion

The SLA designation raises awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool and that specific guidance can be formed to inform future development proposals. It also raises awareness and recognition for a valued landscape within an area already identified as an important historical and visually valued area. Without a SLA designation the value of the landscape identified through LANDMAP would not be differentiable between this and lower value landscapes.

Coherence

Despite no outstanding layers the area comprises all 5 high aspect layers which are mainly overlapping. This SLA comprises the following LANDMAP fabric:

High

Historic Landscape: CNWHL005, CNWHL074, CNWHL082

Geological Landscape: CNWGL083

Cultural Landscape: CNWCL018

Visual and Sensory: CNWVS008, CNWVS017, CNWVS075

Landscape Habitat: CNWLH063

No outstanding layers.

3.3 Elwy and Aled Valleys

Need

The area is a locally important landscape in all landscape layers and of such qualities of such significance in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a SLA. There are very few other statutory landscape designations which protect the area. The nearby Elwy Valley Woods SAC designation is not included in the SLA area based on the criteria used but this has its own European protected status based on habitat value.

Need for clarity in policy constraints

A SLA is required to focus planning policy objectives, identify policy constraints relevant to a particular area and to give greater weight to landscape considerations in decision making. The SLA designation will be a material consideration for refusal of inappropriate planning applications.

The valley areas are unique in the County rich in habitat and geological value. Without a SLA designation the value of the landscape identified through LANDMAP would not be differentiable between this and lower value landscapes.

Focused Management and Promotion

The SLA designation raises awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool and that specific guidance can be formed to inform future development proposals. It also raises awareness and recognition for a valued landscape within an area already identified as an important ecological area.

Coherence

This SLA comprises the following LANDMAP fabric:

High:

Historic Landscape: CNWHL013, CNWHL030, CNWHL077, CNWHL080.

Geological Landscape: CNWGL047, CNWGL046, CNWGL050, CNWGL045, CNWGL049.

Cultural Landscape: CNWCL012, CNWCL019

Visual and Sensory: CNWVS020, CNWVS021, CNWVS066

Outstanding:

Landscape Habitat: CNWLH039, CNWLH040, CNWLH064

Cultural Landscape: CNWCL003.

3.4 Hiraethog

Need

The area is a locally important landscape and has visual, cultural, historical, geological and ecological characteristics and qualities of such concentration in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a SLA. There are other European designations including SSSIs but the Council considers effective protection of areas surrounding these as having locally important in terms of the landscape value and complimentary to those other designations. This area has also been defended from inappropriate development especially significant wind turbine development in the interests of visual landscape and ecology. The Hiraethog is largely covered by SSSI and unimproved moor and grassland but it is also a key area for tourism with walking trails and links to the reservoirs of Llyn Brenig and Llyn Aled situated to the west of the SLA.

The landscape type is both locally and regionally rare. There is therefore a requirement to safeguard the conservation of a landscape of notable rarity that adds to local or regional distinctiveness and diversity.

Need for clarity in policy constraints

The area is a locally important landscape in all landscape layers and of such qualities of such significance in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a Special Landscape Area. Designating as a SLA provides an opportunity to safeguard a locally significant landscape valued for natural beauty under pressure from development especially so for wind turbines. The landscape in question has a limited capacity for change or further cumulative change without significantly deteriorating in character, quality and therefore local landscape value. It is also an area widely overlooked from views from within Snowdonia National Park.

Without a SLA designation the value of the landscape identified through LANDMAP would not be differentiable between this and lower value landscapes and less defensible against inappropriate forms of development.

Focused Management and Promotion

The SLA designation is intended to raise awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool for targeted landscape management schemes with complementary links to other tourism and access initiatives. This will raise awareness and recognition for the valued landscape outside of nationally designated areas.

Coherence

This SLA comprises the following LANDMAP fabric:

High

Geological Landscape: CNWGL096

Cultural Landscape: CNWCL020

Visual and Sensory: CNWVS003, CNWVS046, CNWVS071

Landscape Habitat: CNWLH071

Outstanding:

Historic Landscape: CNWHL047

Landscape Habitat: CNWLH053

Cultural Landscape: CNWCL021

3.5 Cerrigydrudion and the A5 corridor

Need

The area is a locally important landscape and has high value visual, geological, and historical characteristics and outstanding cultural qualities therefore is of such significance in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a SLA. There are other European designations including SSSIs within the area but the Council considers effective protection of areas surrounding these as being locally important and complimentary to other designations. This area has also been defended from inappropriate development especially significant wind turbine development in the interests of landscape and ecology. The landscape type is both locally and regionally rare. There is therefore a requirement to safeguard the conservation of a landscape of notable rarity that adds to local or regional distinctiveness and diversity.

Need for clarity in policy constraints

The area is a locally important landscape in all landscape layers and of such qualities of such significance in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a SLA.

Without a SLA designation the value of the landscape identified through LANDMAP would not be differentiable between this and lower value landscapes. This area is a key access point into the county along the A5 and is a historic route through Conwy's rural landscape.

Focused Management and Promotion

The SLA designation raises awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool and that specific guidance can be formed to inform future development proposals. It also raises awareness and recognition for a valued landscape within an area already identified as a culturally rich landscape area.

Coherence

This SLA comprises the following LANDMAP fabric:

High

Historic Landscape: CNWHL045

Geological Landscape: CNWGL101, CNWGL102

Visual and Sensory: CNWVS006, CNWVS013, CNWVS050, CNWVS078

Landscape Habitat: CNWLH086

Outstanding:

Cultural Landscape: CNWCL027

3.6 Conwy Valley

Need

The area is a locally important landscape in all aspects layers and of such quality and concentration in the local context as to be worthy of identification as a SLA. The area is also under pressure from sporadic rural development especially from poorly sited static caravan/chalet development due to a past weakness of local policy. The area is a key point of access to Snowdonia National Park and approach along the Conwy Valley. Views need to be preserved and the landscape treated respectfully so as not to degrade existing qualities and views.

There are other designations in the area such as the Zone of Visual Influence for the World Heritage site around Conwy Castle, Coastal Zone policy NTE/6, SSSI designation to the Conwy estuary and tidal river system, and green wedges, but there is no current robust landscape designation. The landscape type is both locally and regionally unique. There is therefore a requirement to safeguard the conservation of a landscape of notable rarity that adds to local or regional distinctiveness and diversity.

Designating as a SLA provides an opportunity to safeguard a locally significant landscape valued for its proximity to Conwy town and Conwy Castle World Heritage site at a unique position to SNP which as an appealing area is under pressure for inappropriate development. The landscape in question has limited capacity for further cumulative change degradation without significantly deteriorating in character, quality and local views therefore is of local landscape value.

Need for clarity in policy constraints

The Conwy valley area has suffered from a reliance on outdated local policy documents which lacked detail and robustness. The main threat is from visual obtrusive development in an otherwise natural environment of woodland, forestry and farmland including landscape features of mountain streams, stone walls and semi-improved grassland. Views are an important element to the area and its approach to SNP, Conwy castle and wider uplands of Conwy. Intervisibility between other SLAs and SNP will also be a future consideration. The protection of the area from inappropriate wind turbine development will also be a key future objective.

Focused Management and Promotion

The SLA designation is intended to raise awareness of the special characteristics, qualities and importance of a locally valued landscape so that it can be promoted as a positive management tool to ensure quality design and landscape treatment is a key part of any development. Whilst tourism is key to the area and links to SNP development in this area will be required to be of exceptional quality complementary to the setting and specific aspect layer(s) in which it is sited.

Coherence

This SLA comprises the following LANDMAP fabric:

High:

Historic Landscape: CNWHL060, CNWHL061, CNWHL064, CNWHL069, CNWHL071

Geological Landscape: CNWGL039, CNWGL029, CNWGL032, CNWGL040, CNWGL110, CNWGL056, CNWGL034, CNWGL059

Visual and Sensory: CNWVS018, CNWVS058, CNWVS064, CNWVS067, CNWVS073, CNWVS074.

Landscape Habitat: CNWLH027, CNWLH050, CNWLH054, CNWLH087.

Outstanding:

Historic Landscape: CNWHL066, CNWHL068

Geological Landscape: CNWGL028, CNWGL058

Visual and Sensory: CNWVS015

4. Purpose of Policy NTE/5

- 4.1 A SLA Impact Statement will be required for all development outside of the settlement boundaries as defined on the proposals maps and all development over 15 dwellings or 0.5 hectares inside the settlement boundaries. This can preferably be incorporated in the Design and Access Statement or as a separate document which explores the design reasoning and responsiveness to the SLA(s) in which it is located. A SLA Impact statement will be expected to refer back to LANDMAP information and provide details as to which of the five landscape character aspects is affected and how the development addresses any impact.
- 4.2 The integration of any development within the landscape should also have regard to landscape elements, such as walls, trees or hedgerows which are important to landscape character and should be retained. Development which is incapable of being sensitively and unobtrusively integrated into the landscape, and which would be detrimental to the specific landscape character zone will not be permitted. In certain cases, the proposed development may benefit from being landscaped, in a manner which is in keeping with the locality, to minimise its impact

5. Consistency with Neighbouring Authorities

Conwy shares authority boundaries with Snowdonia National Park Authority (SNPA) and Denbighshire County Council. A very small coastal section is shared with Gwynedd County Council.

Snowdonia LDP 2011

Snowdonia National Park uses LANDMAP to inform Landscape Character Areas with specific Management Plan aspirations relating to each LCA. There are 3 LCAs which directly border Conwy County Borough. These together with the Management Plan aspirations include:

Snowdonia National Park Landscape Character Area with management objectives:	CCBC Commentary
LCA1 – Carneddau <u>National Park Management Plan Objectives</u> Objective 5a: Promote ecological connectivity. Objective 8: Protect and enhance distinctive landscapes and character types. Objective 11b: Understand value, protect and enhance scheduled buildings, sites and landscapes.	It is considered that there are no negative implications on the SNP management plan objectives as a result of the Conwy LDP. There is regular contact between

<p>Objective 12: Understand value, protect and enhance non scheduled sites, structures and the wider historic environment.</p> <p>Objective 19: Promote use of sustainable transport to visitors.</p> <p>Objective 21: Promote economic growth in the environmental goods and services sectors.</p>	<p>planning departments and cross- boundary liaison and consultation on proposals in close proximity to each authority's boundary.</p>
<p>LCA6 - Gwydyr Forest <u>National Park Management Plan Objectives</u> Objective 1c: Manage the effects of climate change through energy efficiency and good design. Objective 2: Promote good quality, sustainable design in new and existing buildings. Objective 5: Promote ecological connectivity. Objective 8: Protect and enhance distinctive landscapes and character types. Objective 19: Provides the use of sustainable transport to visitors. Objective 24: Provide and improve sustainable transport services. Objective 25: Reduce traffic and parking pressures.</p>	<p>There are no allocations in close proximity to this area and development within Conwy CB is constrained by flood risk and topography. Therefore the shared settlements of Trefriw and Dolgarrog will mainly be expanded within the SNPA part of the settlement. The Conwy LDP supports tourism development in the area which promote cross boundary improvement to services, access and facilities.</p>
<p>LCA8 - Migneint <u>National Park Management Plan Objectives</u> Objective 5: Promote ecological connectivity. Objective 8: Protect and enhance distinctive landscapes and character types. Objective 19: Promote the use of sustainable transport to visitors. Objective 24: Promote and improve sustainable transport services. Objective 25: Reduce traffic and parking pressures.</p>	<p>The Migneint is partly protected as a SAC and SPA. It lies to the south of the Plan Area well away from any proposed development. Wind turbine development would be discouraged within or adjacent to this area. Both Authorities will consult each other on any proposal considered to have a cross-boundary impact.</p>

Although a different approach has been taken to link with the SNP Management Plan, the objectives are not considered to be affected by those in Conwy relating to its own SLAs or any in-combination negative effects. Impacts on all European protected sites, including those in neighbouring areas, have been assessed in BP12/Habitats Regulations Appraisal.

Denbighshire LDP 2011

Denbighshire County Council in there submitted LDP have used existing landscape protection policies:

Policy VOE 1 – Key areas of protection	CCBC Commentary
The following areas will be protected from inappropriate development and, wherever possible, enhanced for their particular characteristics, and value to local communities in Denbighshire:	n/a
i) Statutory designated sites for nature conservation;	Conwy CBC does not intend to develop or impact negatively on any designated site for nature conservation.
ii) Local Areas designated /or identified because of their landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, archaeological, and / or agricultural value;	No impact as a result of Conwy LDP.
iii) Formal Public open space and leisure facilities;	No impact as a result of Conwy LDP.
iv) Employment land and buildings Sites of built heritage, historic landscapes, historic parks and gardens;	No impact as a result of Conwy LDP.
v) Greenfield land within a defined floodplain.	No impact as a result of Conwy LDP.
vi) Land designated for community use	No impact as a result of Conwy LDP.
Policy VOE 2 - Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.	
In determining Development proposals within or affecting the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Area of Outstanding Beauty (AOB), will be supported where there would be no development that would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the landscape and provided the development is acceptable in terms of other Local Development Plan policies.	The AONB is located 10km from the Conwy/ Denbighshire Authority boundary therefore the closest SLA designation will in no way pose a threat to the AONB. Other policies have been assessed through the HRA in BP11.

6. Conclusions and Summary

The countywide coverage to previous landscape protection areas through previous planning documents has led to its weakness and difficulty in defending landscape value of one area over another. The revised approach to SLAs taken in this document introduces a much more refined methodology in using LANDMAP to inform and identify specific SLAs. The study has identified 6 key areas where multiple layers of LANDMAP data overlap therefore identifying areas of highest importance.

The Council has relied on outdated policy documents in the past and this has led to sporadic development and an inability to defend decisions based on landscape value. The advantages of this new policy and guidance will be greater clarity and greater protection of the most valuable areas.

The Council have consulted with neighbouring authorities to determine whether there are any further cross-boundary issues identified and both authorities are satisfied that the proposals are to have positive effects in terms of any cross-boundary impacts.

7. Further reading and information

- Countryside Council for Wales- Landmap: www.landmap.ccw.gov.uk
- LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas, CCW, 2008.
- Design Commission for Wales: www.dcfw.org
- Cabe Space: www.cabe.org.uk
- Conwy CBC Design SPG: www.conwy.gov.uk
- Snowdonia National Park Authority, Supplementary Planning Guidance – Landscape, June 2011.

Appendix 1

The following policy is as it appears in section 4.6.6 in the Revised Deposit LDP 2011:

POLICY NTE/5 THE LANDSCAPE AND PROTECTING SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Special Landscape Areas are shown on the proposal map and designated in the following locations:

- a) Great Orme and Creuddyn Peninsular
- b) Conwy Valley
- c) Abergele hinterland
- d) Elwy and Aled Valleys
- e) Hiraethog
- f) Cerrigydrudion and the A5 corridor

In order to conserve the attributes of the Special Landscape Areas development proposals will have to show particular regard to the character of each locality in order to minimise their impact. Development will only be permitted if it is shown to be capable of being satisfactorily integrated into the landscape. In appropriate cases planning applications should be accompanied by a landscape character assessment to assess the visual and landscape impacts of the development.

All proposals, both within and outside SLAs, will be considered against the Development Principles and other policies in the Plan designed to protect the environment and landscape character.