

Hanson Aggregates

**Craig-yr-Hesg Quarry**

Landscape and visual appraisal  
of proposed extension site

May 2006

White Young Green  
21 Park Place  
Cardiff

T: 029 2072 9000  
F: 029 20 395 965  
E: [planning.cardiff@wyg.com](mailto:planning.cardiff@wyg.com)  
W: [www.wyg.com](http://www.wyg.com)



## 1. Introduction

This landscape and visual appraisal report has been prepared by White Young Green Planning following a briefing meeting at Craig yr Hesg Quarry on 20 February 2006. White Young Green has been appointed to determine the most appropriate extent for a proposed quarry extension to minimise adverse landscape and visual impact. Initial draft proposals have been prepared by Hanson Aggregates, reproduced on drawing A029430 L05, showing a Specific Site for the quarry extension with a 150m buffer zone from the properties at Glyncoch and Cefn, which are the nearest settlements to the site. During the briefing meeting reference was made to the recommendation of a 200m wide buffer zone as specified in paragraph 71 of M TAN Aggregates (February 2004). With the aim of achieving an acceptable level of impact, which can be adequately mitigated, this report will determine the most beneficial footprint for the quarry extension in landscape and visual terms.

This report describes the landscape and visual appraisal of the proposed quarry extension site and its setting, which is supplemented by the following drawings:

- L.01: Landscape and visual appraisal
- L.02: Views from the north
- L.03: Views from the east
- L.04: Views from the west
- L.05: Site appraisal
- L.06: Site photographs
- L.07: Mitigation measures

The methodology used for the landscape and visual appraisal is based on recommendations and guidance published by the Countryside Commission<sup>1</sup> and The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment<sup>2</sup>. The appraisal is based on a combination of desk studies and field surveys. The desk study included reference to other studies and landscape character assessments, including the LANDMAP information available on the Countryside Council for Wales website<sup>3</sup>. The subsequent landscape and visual field surveys were undertaken on 28

---

1 Countryside Commission, Landscape Assessment Guidance, 1993.

2 The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2nd Edition), E&FN Spon 2002

3 CCW Landmap website: <http://landmap.ccw.gov.uk/map/Map.aspx>

February and 6 March 2006 and involved evaluation of landscape features, character, and visual amenity.

## 2. Outline Landscape Appraisal

### Landscape Character



The landscape and visual appraisal drawing, A029430 L01, illustrates the main features, settlement pattern and transport network. The proposed extension site is located adjacent to Craig yr Hesg quarry, between the settlements of Pontypridd to the south and Glyncoch to the north. Properties within the settlement of Glyncoch are in close proximity to the northern part of the quarry where rear gardens are directly adjacent to the site boundary. The quarry is accessed directly off the B4273 main road from Pontypridd to Glyncoch and Ynysybwl.



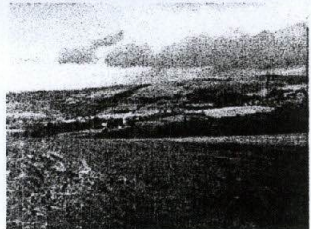
The landscape character of the area is strongly influenced by the pattern of topography with steep, wooded valley side slopes rising from the valley floor. The main topographical feature in the area, the River Taf valley, is defined by Cefn Eglwysilan to the east which rises to a height of 382m AOD. Land to the west of the valley, upon which the proposed extension site is located, rises to over 240m AOD. The hilltops and ridgelines are typically agricultural pasture with either small scale fields or large, open areas with no enclosure. The enclosure field pattern is common throughout the upland area to the west of Craig yr Hesg quarry, while extensive areas of open land occur at Cefn Eglwysilan. Fields have a variety of boundary types including tall, overgrown and discontinuous hedgerows, fences and dry stone walls. The levels of maintenance for walls, hedges and fences vary considerably from one area to the next.



Hedgerow trees, small areas of woodland and larger blocks of deciduous woodland on valley side slopes are characteristic of the area. Coed Craig yr Hesg, adjacent to the southern boundary of Craig yr Hesg quarry, is a densely wooded ridge rising from the valley floor at around 80m to a height of 200m AOD.

### Landscape amenity and recreation

The principal attractions for informal outdoor recreation in the area include cycling and walking the network of cycle ways and public footpaths. Public rights of way extend from the settlements, providing good links to open access land. The extent of the open access land is shown on A029430 L01; it includes common land, land managed by the Forestry Commission



and areas with access rights under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.

There are no public rights of way within the proposed extension site. The nearest public route to the site extends from Daren-Ddu Road, a track which is impassable to vehicles, believed to be a public right of way. Public footpaths cross agricultural pasture land to the west of the site and connect with the minor road between Penygraigwen and Ynysybwll.

Other public footpaths are further from the site, including several to the northwest of Coed y Cwm. There are also numerous paths across the western side slopes of Cefn Eglwysilan, many of which with elevated, distant views of Craig yr Hesg quarry.

The national cycle network, Celtic Trail 47 shown on drawing, A029430 L01, follows the ridgeline along the minor road between Penygraigwen and Ynysybwll. The Taff Trail, national cycle route 8 and a long distance footpath, follows the River Taf on the western side of the A470.

#### Landscape Planning Policies and Strategies

##### Rhondda Cynon Taf (Taff Ely) Local Plan 1991-2006

This is the adopted development plan for the area because Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council did not commence the preparation of a Unitary Development Plan, which would have replaced the local plan. The plan contains policies of relevance to landscape and protection of historically important features and archaeological remains. The appraisal plan, A029430 L01, illustrates the extent of Special Landscape Areas (SLA) and conservations areas. The locations of nearby Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAM's) are also shown. These monuments and the conservation area at Trallwn in Pontypridd are not considered to be sensitive to the proposed extension to the quarry.

The site identified for the proposed extension and the existing quarry includes a part of the Glyncoch Mountain SLA. This SLA is described in the local plan as:

- steeply sloping topography
- very visible
- attractively covered with high percentage of broadleaf and conifer woodland

- Some areas of existing and disused quarrying. Well integrated into surrounding landscape due to high woodland cover

### 3. Visual Amenity

The landscape and visual appraisal drawing, A029430 L01, illustrates the location of the appraisal photographs shown on drawing A029430 L.02-L.04. The site is visible from three main directions, the north, east and west. The site is obscured from the south by topography and existing vegetation at Coed Craig yr Hesg.

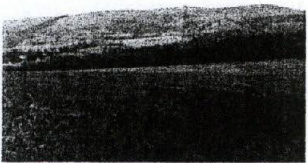
#### Views from the north (refer to A029430 L02)

Views available from the north are from a similar elevation to the proposed extension site at a distance of between 1 and 1.5km. Appraisal photographs 1 and 2 are taken from a public footpath and minor road to the west of the settlement of Coed y Cwm. The proposed extension site is visible in the central part of the view along the horizon. The deciduous woodland at Coed Craig yr Hesg and Penygraigwen also form the horizon in these views. The ridge landform running through the proposed extension site is a prominent feature with the settlement of Glyncoch along its north facing side slopes. Views from public accessible places in Glyncoch were not identified during the appraisal due to the low elevation of the settlement in relation to the site. The land rising to the high point of the ridge also has a convex profile, refer to section A-A' on A029430 L07, which further obscures views from Glyncoch. It is however likely that views are available from the first floor windows of properties nearest the site.

Appraisal photograph 3 illustrates the view available from the settlement of Coed y Cwm. As is the case with other views from the north, the dry stone field boundary walls are identifiable elements on the horizon. These provide potential screening from this acute angle view. The ground surface within the proposed extension site is not identifiable in this view.

#### Views from the east (refer to A029430 L03)

In contrast to views from the north, the extension site is not generally visible in views from the east. In appraisal photographs 4 and 5, the deciduous woodland at Coed Craig yr Hesg obscures the westernmost part of Craig yr Hesg quarry and the entire site for the proposed extension. Appraisal photographs 6 and 7 are taken from more elevated locations along Penheol Ely Road and Eglwysilan Road. In these views the ground surface of the proposed extension site is visible, although the acute angle



of the view ensures that it appears as a narrow band just above the back face of the quarry. The western extension of the quarry will reduce the apparent height of the back face in these views because the level of the land falls towards the west away from the viewpoints.

Views from the west (refer to A029430 L04)

Views available from the west are generally from a higher elevation than the proposed extension site at a distance of between 0.75 and 1.3km. Appraisal photographs 8, 9 and 10 are taken from public footpaths and a minor road between Penygraigwen and Ynysybwll. The proposed extension site is a prominent feature in the central part of the view; the yellow colour of the acid grassland within the site making the site contrast with adjacent fields. The topography of the ridgeline also contributes to the prominence of the site in these views where the site slopes towards the viewpoints. The deciduous woodland at Coed Craig yr Hseg and along Daren Ddu Road screens the south western edge of the site, particularly in appraisal photographs 9 and 10.

The proposed extension site is viewed against land along the eastern side of the River Taf valley in these views, which contrast in colour with the site. During quarrying the northeast face of the extension will be visible, although partly screened in appraisal photographs 9 and 10 by the woodland along Daren Ddu Road.



#### 4. The Site

The site appraisal drawing, A028253 L05, illustrates the main features of the proposed extension site. Photographs are located on A028253 L06.

The proposed extension site is approximately 400m long and 220m wide at its widest part. It is located along a ridgeline with a highpoint located at the western boundary of the existing quarry. The higher part of the site is around 200m AOD where it joins the top of the northwest face of the quarry. From this point the land falls away in all directions to a low point of around 170m AOD in the westernmost corner of the site. Section A-A' on A028253 L07 illustrates the landform of the ridgeline which has a convex profile along the northeast side.

The site is currently semi-improved pasture with acid grassland and it includes two large fields and part of two other small fields. Field boundaries are dry stone walls; these are generally discontinuous with frequent gaps and partly collapsed sections.

Along the northwest boundary of the site there is an area of plantation woodland and a row of trees, which are probably an overgrown hedgerow. This vegetation provides some screening from Cefn Primary School and adjacent properties at Cefn.

A continuous band of deciduous woodland extends along the southwest site boundary which is associated with Daren Ddu Road. This woodland links to Coed Craig yr Hseg through an area of rough grassland, bracken and scrub. The road is inaccessible to vehicles but is used as a public footpath. Publicly accessible, low level views of the site are available from Daren Ddu Road.

To the northeast of the proposed extension site there are two fields, similar in character to those within the site. Beyond these fields to the northeast is an area of rough grassland, bracken and scrub which provides screening between the site and the Rugby Ground, which is not visible from the site. The settlement of Glyncoch is located to the northeast of this area at a lower level than the site. Although house roofs are visible, views from the settlement towards the site would be limited to first floor windows due to the topography, garden boundary fences and vegetation.

## 5. Appraisal Summary

### Landscape Character

The landscape appraisal identified the following elements and features as important in creating the landscape character of the site and its setting:

- pattern of topography with steep, wooded valley side slopes rising from the valley floor.
- open nature of hilltops and ridgelines, which are typically agricultural pasture.
- small scale fields with a variety of boundary types including tall, overgrown and discontinuous hedgerows, fences and dry stone walls.
- dry stone wall field boundaries within the site.
- hedgerow trees, small areas of woodland and larger blocks of deciduous woodland to the southwest and northwest of the site.

### Visual Amenity

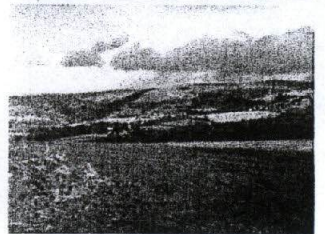
The views available of the extension site can be split into three types by the direction of view. The features of the views and reasons for their sensitivity is summarised below:

Views from the north:

- views from public footpaths, minor roads and to a lesser extent from the settlement of Coed y Cwm.
- the higher part of the extension site is visible along the horizon. The ridge landform running through the proposed extension site is a prominent feature when viewed from the settlement of Coed y Cwm.
- predominantly north eastern half of site visible.
- stone wall field boundaries are an identifiable feature.
- there are limited views from publicly accessible places in Glyncoch.

Views from the east:

- views from public footpaths, minor roads and to a lesser extent from the settlement of Cilfynydd and Bodwenarth.
- ground surface within the extension site is only visible from acute angle at more distant views from elevated locations.



- landform and deciduous woodland at Coed Craig yr Hesg obscures the site from the south and southeast.
- existing quarry and the northwest quarry face is visible so views will extend into the extension site as it progresses to the northwest. The height of this quarry face will reduce as the level of the ground falls to the west.

#### Views from the west

- views available from the west are generally from a higher elevation than the proposed extension site at a distance of between 0.75 and 1.3km.
- views available are from public footpath, cycle route, minor roads and scattered farmsteads and dwellings.
- proposed extension site is a prominent feature in the central part of the view.
- deciduous woodland at Coed Craig yr Hesg and along Daren Ddu Road screens the south western edge of the site from some areas.

#### Receptors to change

The following list summarises the main receptors to change, potentially sensitive to visual impact:

- users of public footpaths, the national cycle network and minor roads.
- residents of scattered dwellings and farmsteads west and southwest of the site.
- open access land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000.
- residents at Coed y cwm and Glyncoch.

#### The Site

The following issues were identified during the site appraisal:

- The site is currently semi-improved pasture with acid grassland.
- Field boundaries are dry stone walls.
- Publicly accessible, low level views of the site are available from Daren Ddu Road.
- views from Glyncoch would be limited to first floor windows due to the topography, garden boundary fences and vegetation.

## 6. Conclusion

The mitigation proposals for the proposed extension site are shown on A028253 L07. These measures aim to reduce the adverse impacts upon Daren Ddu road and properties at Cefn and Glyncoch. The measures are summarised below:

- Soil storage bunds have been located along the northeast, northwest and southwest site boundaries. These bunds would be 2 to 3m high and would be seeded with a suitable acid grassland seed mix to create an appearance similar to adjacent fields. These mounds are particularly important to screen views from Daren Ddu Road and properties at Glyncoch and Cefn. It is not suggested that these mounds would be planted as this would be out of character with the landscape setting.
- The proposed extension will result in the removal of approximately 500m of dry stone field boundary walls. In addition to the potential loss of what may be reptile habitat, this will result in adverse landscape impact because these walls are a distinctive feature of the area. The walls are also visible in near and distant views of the site. It is proposed to re-use the stone recovered from these walls to build a section of wall along the northeast side of the site. This will restore the field pattern and provide screening of low level views from Glyncoch, softening the visual impact of the soil storage mounds. In addition, it is suggested that any remaining stone is used to carry out repairs to sections of damaged sections of walling adjacent to the site.
- Although there is a security issue at Craig yr Hesg quarry which has necessitated the erection of steel palisade fences, it is not desirable to have fences visible along the extension site boundaries. Such fences would be visible from some distance and be obviously out of character with the landscape setting. In order to maintain security and the extension site it is suggested that a security fence is located inside the line of the soil storage mounds
- It will be necessary to protect the retained vegetation along Daren Ddu Road and the northwest site boundary. Protective fencing will be installed in these areas during soil stripping and the initial phases of quarrying.

The mitigation measures proposed would reduce the negative landscape and visual impacts associated with the extension of Craig yr Hesg quarry to an acceptable level given the importance of the mineral reserve. The extent of the proposed extension has been defined to retain important

features and minimise impact on nearby properties and settlements. The western extent is defined by the retention of Daren Ddu Road and associated vegetation. The northern extent is defined by the dry stone walls and vegetation along the field boundaries. Also, there is a gentle gradient towards this boundary before the land become steeper to the north, making it more visible in views from the west. The east extent of the proposed quarry extension is defined by the buffer zone, either 200m wide or potentially reduced to 150m wide.

The site is predominantly visible from elevated areas to the west but a reduction in the extent of the site to accommodate a wider buffer zone of 200m would not significantly reduce adverse impacts from these areas. Furthermore, a reduction in the buffer width from 200m to 150m would result in no greater visual impact on elevated views from the north or east.

In conclusion, there would not be a perceived reduction in potential adverse visual impacts on available views of the proposed extension site by allowing a 200m wide buffer from nearby properties in Glyncoch instead of 150m.

## 7. Appendices

### References

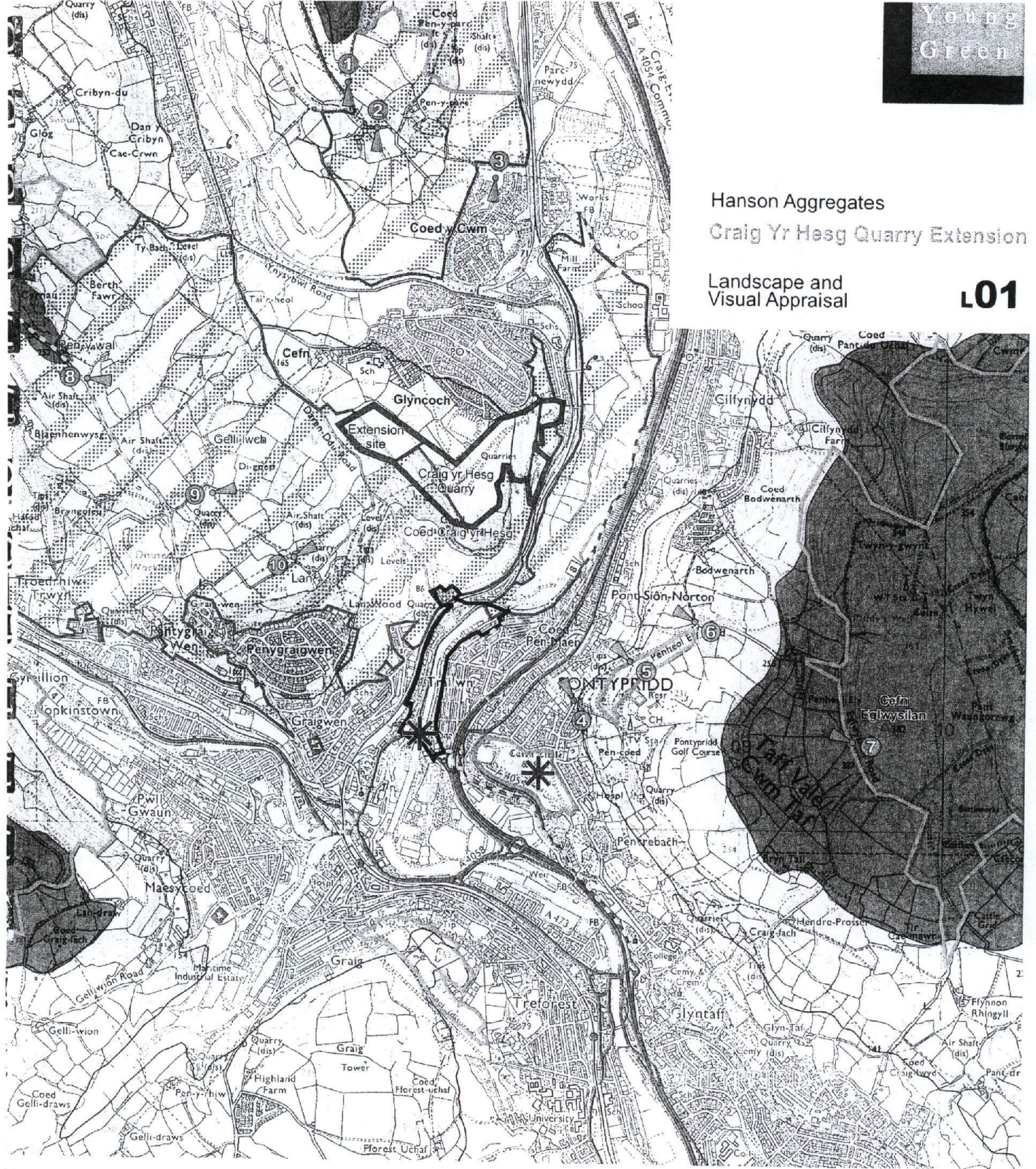
- CCW Landmap website: <http://landmap.ccw.gov.uk/>
- Countryside Commission, Landscape Assessment Guidance, 1993.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council: Rhondda Cynon Taf Local Plan 1991-2006
- Sustrans website: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/>
- The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (2nd Edition), E&FN Spon 2002.

**Drawings**

- L.01: Landscape and visual appraisal
- L.02: Views from the north
- L.03: Views from the east
- L.04: Views from the west
- L.05: Site appraisal
- L.06: Site photographs
- L.07: Mitigation measures

Hanson Aggregates  
Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Extension

Landscape and Visual Appraisal  
**L01**



**Key**

- Extent of Craig yr Hesg Quarry and potential extension site
- Urban areas
- Special Landscape Area (SLA)
- Conservation Area
- Open Access Land
- Public footpaths
- Height Above Ordnance Datum (AOD)
  - Above 250m
  - 150-250m
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Appraisal photograph locations Refer to A029430 L02 to L04
- Cycle Route 8 (Taff Trail) and 47 Celtic Trail

North

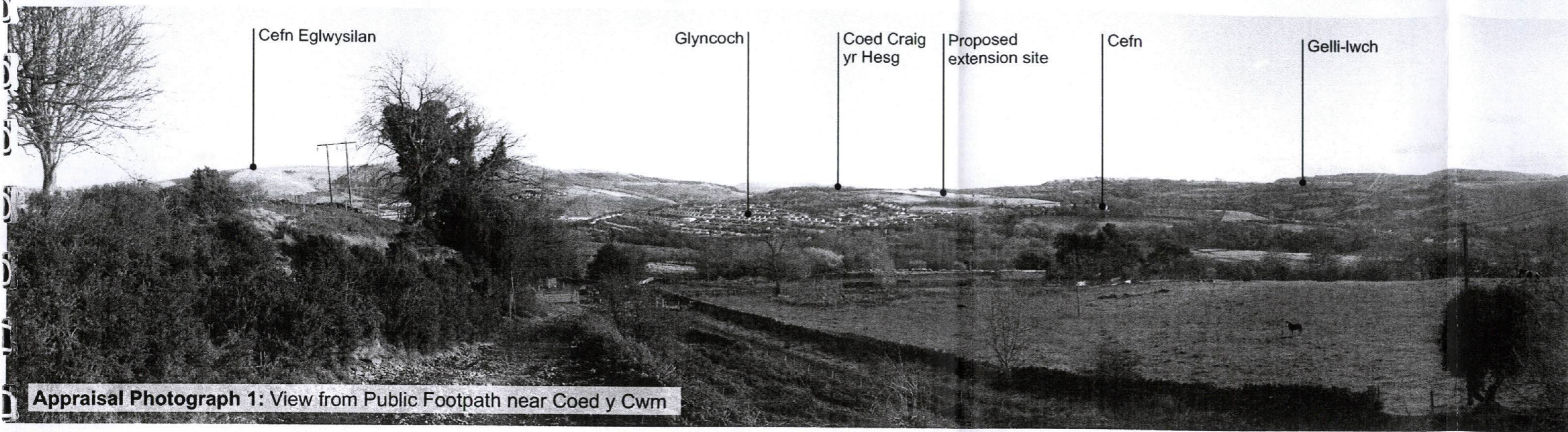
0 0.5 1km

Scale 1:25,000 Do not scale from this drawing

**A029430: L01(a).cdr**  
April 2006

Based upon the Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright, White Young Green PLC. Licence no. AR 1000 17603



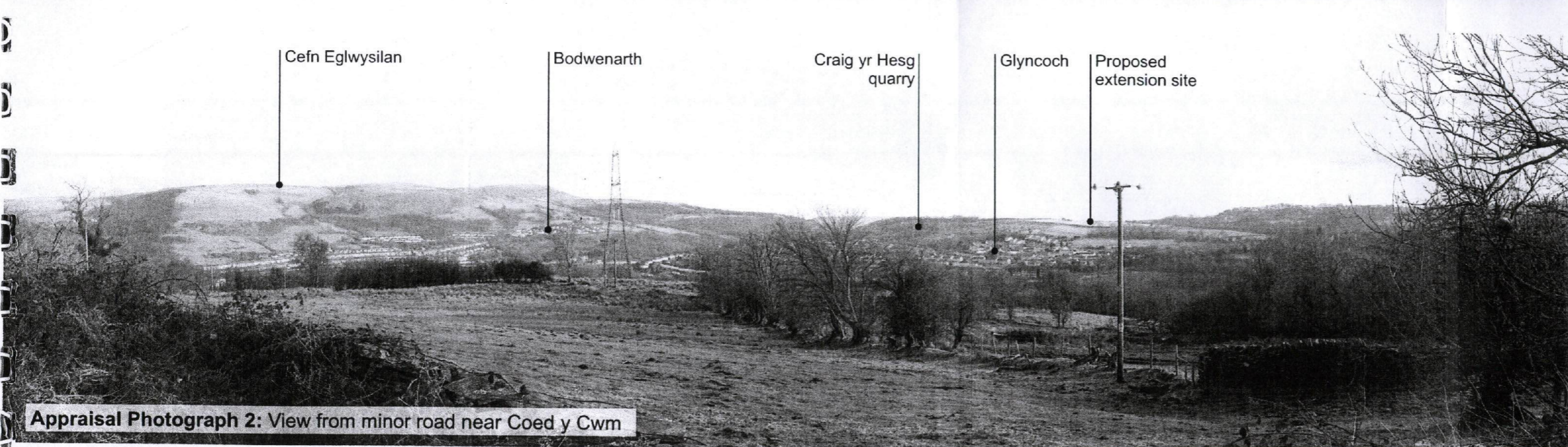


Appraisal Photograph 1: View from Public Footpath near Coed y Cwm

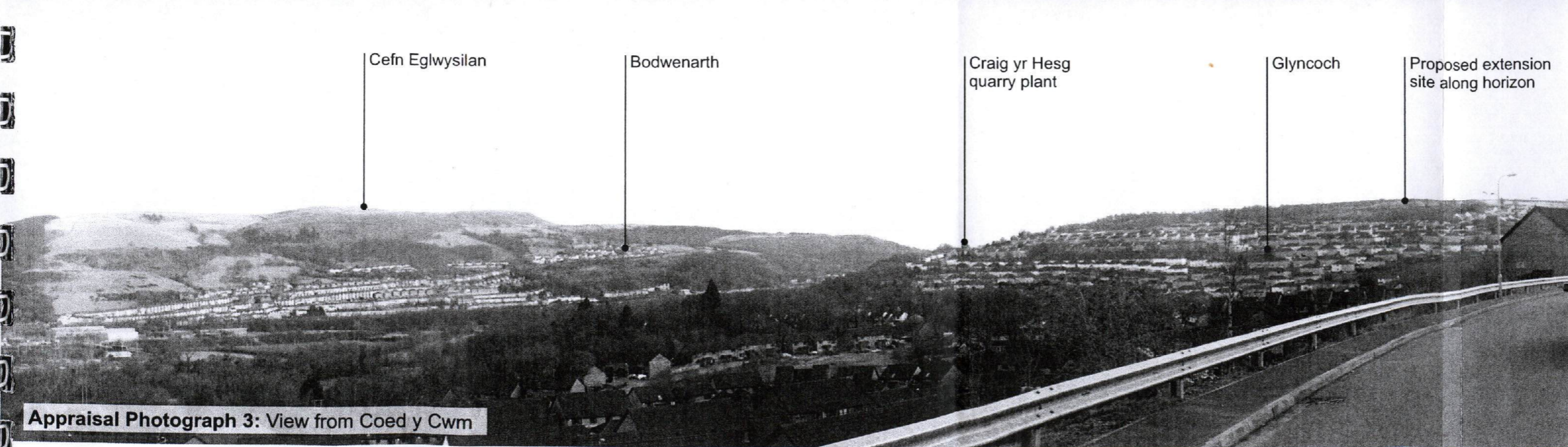
Hanson Aggregates  
Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Extension

Views from the north

L02



Appraisal Photograph 2: View from minor road near Coed y Cwm



Appraisal Photograph 3: View from Coed y Cwm

Hanson Aggregates  
Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Extension

Views from the east **L03**

Coed Craig yr Hesg      Craig yr Hesg quarry      River Taf floodplain

Appraisal Photograph 4: View from minor road east of Pontypridd

Coed Craig yr Hesg      Proposed extension site just visible      Craig yr Hesg quarry

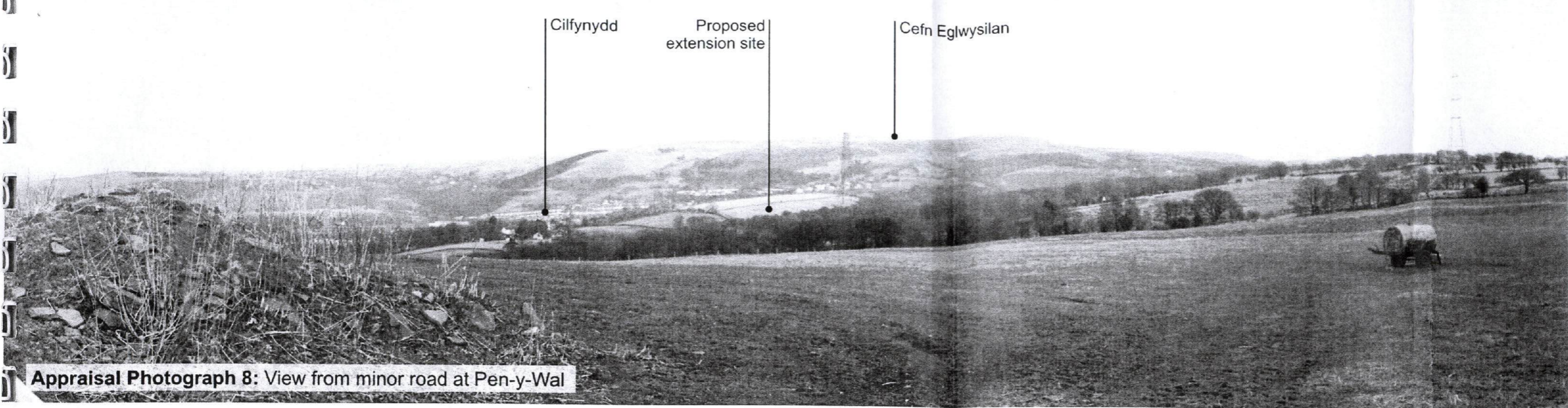
Appraisal Photograph 5: View from minor road east of Pontypridd

Coed Craig yr Hesg      Proposed extension site      Craig yr Hesg quarry      Glyncoch

Appraisal Photograph 6: View from Penheol Ely Road

Coed Craig yr Hesg      Proposed extension site      Glyncoch      Coed y Cwm  
Back face on Craig yr Hesg quarry

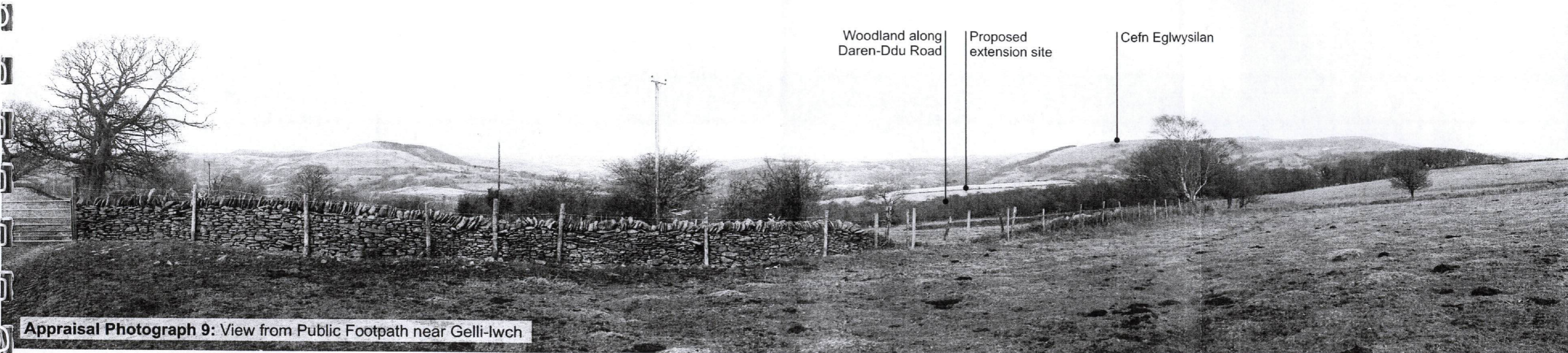
Appraisal Photograph 7: View from Eglwysilan Road



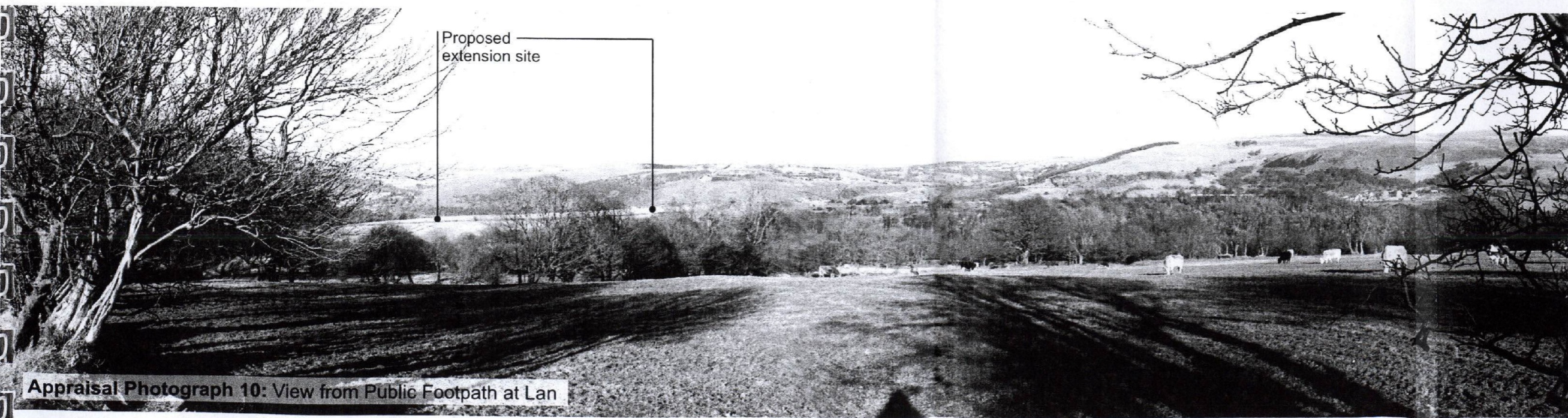
Hanson Aggregates  
Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Extension

Views from the west **L04**

Appraisal Photograph 8: View from minor road at Pen-y-Wal



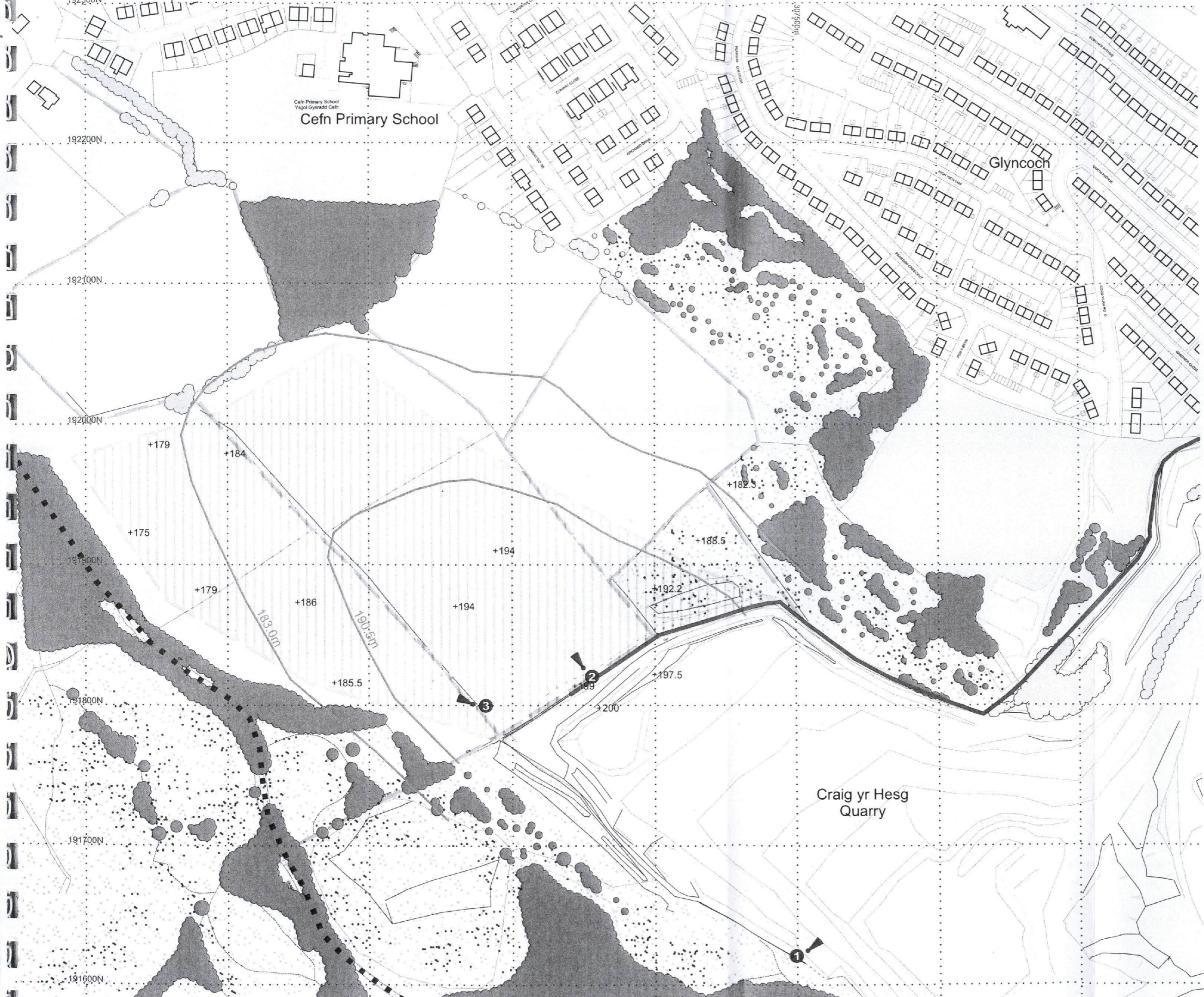
Appraisal Photograph 9: View from Public Footpath near Gelli-lwch



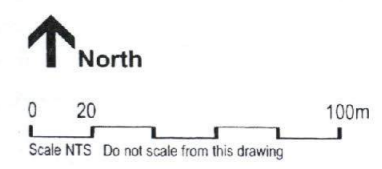
Appraisal Photograph 10: View from Public Footpath at Lan

Hanson Aggregates  
Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Extension

Site Appraisal **L05**

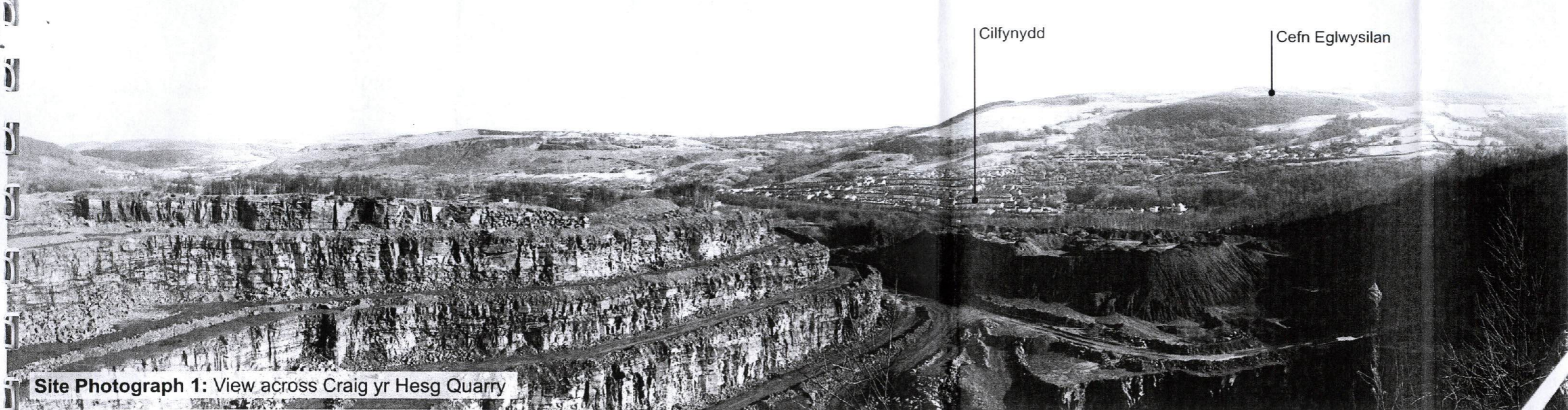


- Key**
- Woodland and scrub
  - Natural regeneration of scrub within quarry
  - Overgrown hedgerows and trees along field boundaries
  - Rough grassland, bracken and scrub
  - Semi-improved grassland
  - Amenity grassland
  - Discontinuous Dry stone walling
  - Daren Ddu Road
  - Steel pallisade security fence along quarry boundary
  - Contours (m AOD)
  - Spot heights (m AOD)
  - Maximum extent of quarry with 150m buffer from nearest properties
  - 1 Site Photographs (refer to A029430 L06)



**A029430: L05(a).cdr**  
April 2006

Based upon the Ordnance Survey Explorer map with the permission of The Controller Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright, White Young Green PLC. Licence no. AR 1000 17803

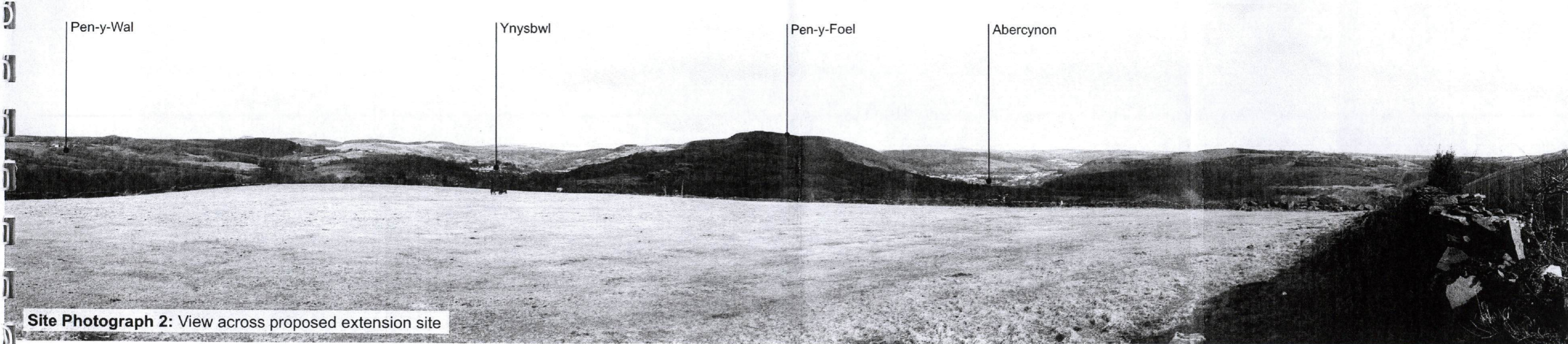


Site Photograph 1: View across Craig yr Hesg Quarry

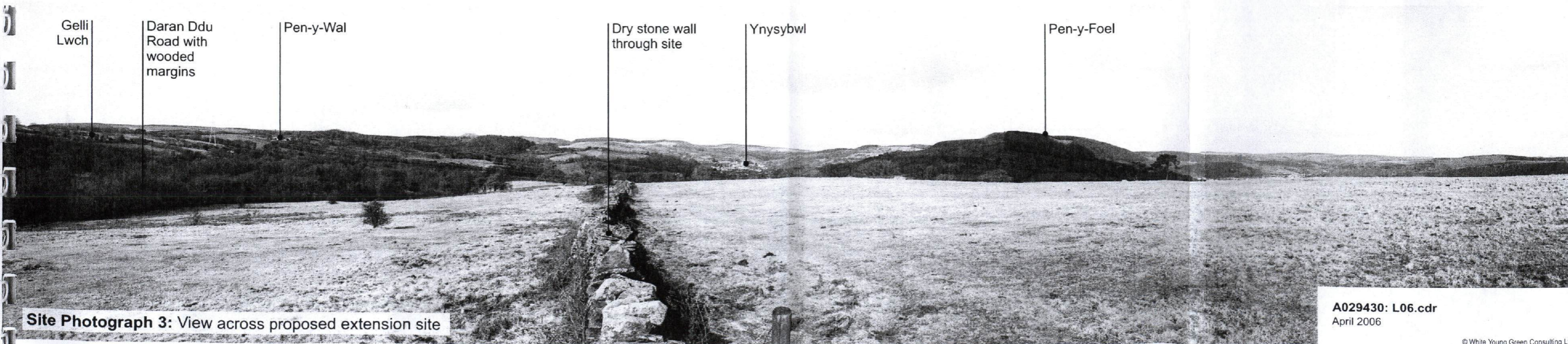
Hanson Aggregates  
Craig Yr Hesg Quarry Extension

Site Photographs

L06



Site Photograph 2: View across proposed extension site



Site Photograph 3: View across proposed extension site

