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## SECTION 2: BASELINE LANDSCAPE OF THE SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK

### Landscape Character Baseline of the Study Area

#### Key Landscape Characteristics of the Snowdonia National Park

- 2.1 Snowdonia is comprised of a diverse mix of landscapes many of which are highly valued for their great natural beauty and tranquillity. The Snowdonia National Park is renowned for its rugged mountainous landscapes but also offers beautiful and unspoilt valley and coastal landscapes.
- 2.2 Landscape character assessment undertaken for the National Park has resulted in 25 LCAs being identified. The LCAs are illustrated in Figure 3 and are set out in the following report:
- Supplementary Planning Guidance 7 Landscapes and Seascapes of Eryri– Snowdonia National Park Authority,
  - Eryri Local Development Plan 2007-2022 (para 3.10, p.44). This document subdivides the local planning authority area into 25 LCAs.

#### Protected Landscapes (*Statutory and Non-Statutory*) Within the Study Area

- 2.3 The landscapes of the Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd and Snowdonia National Park are protected by a significant proportion of both statutory and non-statutory landscape related designations.

#### World Heritage Sites

##### *Caernarfon Castle and Town Walls, Beaumaris and Harlech Castles (Castles and Town Walls of King Edward in Gwynedd) World Heritage Site.*

- 2.4 The extensive and detailed contemporary technical, social, and economic documentation of the castles, and the survival of adjacent fortified town at Caernarfon, makes them one of the major references of medieval history<sup>14</sup>.
- 2.5 There is no detailed Guidance regarding the siting of proposed wind energy, telecommunications and tourism developments in relation to this World Heritage Site or it's essential setting, however Part 2 of The Castles and Town Walls of Edward I in Gwynedd, World Heritage Site Management Plan<sup>15</sup> discusses the importance of significant/historic views into and out of each monument in the World Heritage Site, stating that inappropriate development would obstruct or interfere with these views, which generally extend beyond the areas of essential setting. This is particularly relevant to the wind energy, telecommunications and tourism developments.

#### Eryri Local Development Plan (ELDP) Area of Natural Beauty (Development Policy 2)

- 2.6 *'Areas of Natural Beauty, as defined under Section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Amendment Act 1985, have been identified on the [LDP] Proposals Map. These areas often coincide with area of open country (as defined and mapped under CRow Act 2000) and within areas of nature conservation importance. They include extensive tracts of unenclosed uplands, heather moorland and semi natural mountain grassland. The [National Park] Authority expects prospective developers to recognise their sensitivity and value and to prove that any development will not adversely affect their character or amenity.'* (Paragraph 3.9)

#### ELDP Area of Undeveloped Coast (Development Policy 2)

- 2.7 *'...small areas of Snowdonia's coastline can be described as having a largely unspoilt character. These are identified on the Proposals map as the Undeveloped Coast. They are broadly coterminous with the coastal features identified by Section 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 in that they are 'areas of ....., cliff or foreshore (including any bank, barrier, beach, flat or other land adjacent to the foreshore), the natural beauty of which the Authority considers is particularly important to conserve. In addition areas of coastal heath on cliffs and former*

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<sup>14</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1540>

<sup>15</sup> <http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/historicenvironment/protection/worldheritage/cstlsEdward1/?lang=en>

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*cliffs have been included south of Llwyngwriol along with the small enclosed fields which are characteristic of this area.’ (Paragraph 3.7)*

## Open Access Land

- 2.8 In May 2005 the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) came into force, clearly identifying open access land (open country and/or common land) in Wales. One fifth of Wales is mapped as ‘access land’ where the public have a right of access on foot.<sup>16</sup> A large proportion of land within the Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd and Snowdonia National Park is mapped as Open Access Land.

## National Trails

- 2.9 National Trails in England and Wales (formerly Long Distance Routes) are designated long distance footpaths and bridleways administered by Natural England and NRW. They are important for both local enjoyment of the countryside and for tourism. Development which can be seen from these paths therefore has the potential to affect this enjoyment.

## Registered Historic Landscapes (Wales)

- 2.10 The Historic Landscapes Register maintained by Cadw aims to help planners and developers introduce changes and new developments in ways that will cause the least harm to the historic character of the land. Inclusion in the Register does not confer statutory protection – but it does help highlight the cultural heritage importance of some parts of the landscape.
- 2.11 The Isle of Anglesey, Gwynedd and Snowdonia National Park partially or fully contains a number of Registered Historic Landscapes which are described within the Register as follows:
- **Aberglaslyn** – ‘A man-made landscape occupying a reclaimed river estuary situated in south Snowdonia, the whole conceived as one man’s grand scheme, probably the most ambitious of its kind in 19th century Britain.’
  - **Ardudwy** – ‘A large, exceptionally archaeologically rich and well-studied landscape situated on the western flanks of the Rhinog Mountains, containing extensive relict evidence of recurrent land use and settlement from prehistoric to recent times.’
  - **Blaenau Ffestiniog** – ‘The foremost slate mining and quarrying landscape in Wales, sited in an elevated natural basin and its tributary valleys in south Snowdonia, containing an undisputed wealth of industrial archaeological remains comprising visually imposing and extensive slate quarry and mine workings, waste tips, associated buildings, transport systems and settlements dating from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries.’
  - **Bro Dolgellau (Vale of Dolgellau)** – ‘A natural basin at the confluence of two valleys situated between Cader Idris, the Arenig and Rhinog Mountains, containing diverse evidence of land use and exploitation from the prehistoric, medieval and recent periods.’
  - **Bro Trawsfynydd a Cwm Prysor (Trawsfynydd Basin and Cwm Prysor)** – ‘A natural upland basin and tributary valley, adjoining the east side of the Rhinog Mountains to the south of Snowdonia, containing well-preserved evidence of communications and recurrent military use from Roman to recent times.’
  - *by recent extensive and outstanding remains of the 19th and 20th centuries slate industry.’*
  - **Dyffryn Dysynni (Dysynni Valley)** – ‘The picturesque Dysynni Valley to the south west of the Cader Idris range in south Gwynedd contains diverse evidence of human occupation and activity from the prehistoric period to the recent past.’
  - **Dyffryn Nantlle (Nantlle Valley)** – ‘A glaciated valley situated on the west side of the Snowdonian massif, having contrasting evidence of relict prehistoric and later land use, superimposed by the 19th and 20th centuries remains of the large-scale industrial exploitation of slate.’
  - **Dyffryn Ogwen (Ogwen Valley)** – ‘The classic glaciated valley in north Snowdonia, containing contrasting evidence of prehistoric and later land use, superimposed by the extensive and visually dramatic remains of the recent and continuing industrial exploitation of slate.’

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<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ccg.gov.uk/enjoying-the-country/open-access-land.aspx>

- **Gogledd Arllechwedd (North Arllechwedd)** - *'A dissected, mainly upland, area situated on the northern flanks of the Carneddau ridge in north Snowdonia, containing well-preserved relict evidence of recurrent land use and settlement from the prehistoric to medieval and later periods.'*
- **Mawddach** – *'A river estuary and surrounding coastal slopes situated to the west of Cader Idris in south Gwynedd, containing extensive relict evidence of diverse land use and activity from prehistoric and later periods.'*
- **Pen Isaf Dyffryn Conwy (Lower Conwy Valley)** - *'A topographically diverse landscape, straddling the lower Conwy valley and adjacent uplands on the north eastern flanks of the Carneddau ridge in north Snowdonia, containing extensive and well-preserved relict evidence of land use, communications and defence from the prehistoric period onwards.'*
- **Y Bala a Glannau Tegid (Bala and Bala Lakesides)** – *'The upper Dee valley provides a natural and historically strategic and important route corridor across North Wales, the area identified here being centred on Bala Lake and its immediate catchment, where there is a succession and concentration of defensive sites and settlements from the Roman and medieval periods.'*

## Registered Historic Parks and Gardens

- 2.12 A large number of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales can be found within the study area and these were placed on a Register because they are nationally valued as they form an important and integral part of the historic and cultural fabric of Wales. The provisions of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2016 means that this is now a statutory register.

## Protected Landscapes (*Statutory and Non-Statutory*) Outside the Study Area

### Areas of Outstanding Beauty

- 2.13 The Cynwyd and Llandrillo AOB (formerly Berwyn Mountains AOB revised March 2013) lies just outside the study area to the south east. The aim of this non-statutory designation is to protect the Berwyn Mountains, in recognition of its nationally important landscape value.

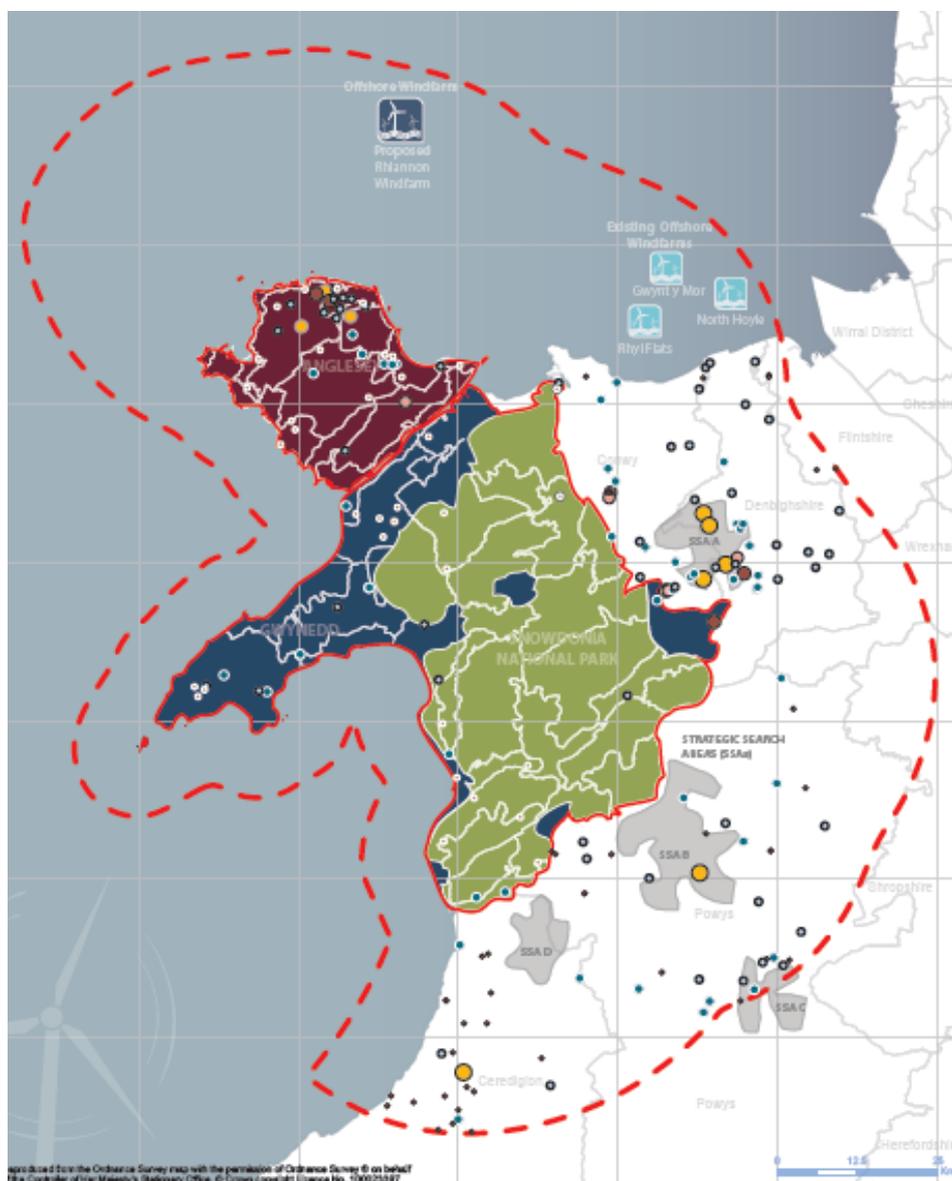
## An Overview of Operational and Consented Developments

- 2.14 The following figures and accompanying tables A9.01 – A9.05 identify and illustrate the development baseline for this study as it relates to the National Park at the end of March 2014.
- Figure 2.1 - Operational and consented wind energy developments shown within the study area and 35 km buffer; including existing and proposed offshore wind energy developments.
  - Figure 2.2 - Operational and consented mobile mast developments shown within the study area and 10 km buffer.
  - Figure 2.3 - Operational and consented static caravan/chalet park developments shown within the study area and 5 km buffer.
- 2.15 The data used to compile Tables A9.01 – A9.05 and Figures 2.1 to 2.3, was provided and confirmed by the Steering Group.
- 2.16 All of the operational developments were considered as part of the baseline for the sensitivity assessments of the LCAs.
- 2.17 For the purposes of developing landscape strategies and considering capacity within each of the LCAs, all of the consented developments were assumed to have been built and as such were considered as part of the baseline, together with operational developments.

## Operational and Consented Wind Energy Developments

- 2.18 The highest concentrations of wind energy developments within the study area for wind energy developments are found to the north of the Isle of Anglesey where there are currently three wind farms in operation together with a number of single and double wind turbine developments of various heights (some up to 92.5 m to blade tip). There are a number of mainly domestic, micro and small scale developments scattered throughout Gwynedd; however there is one large development (Braich Ddu) located on the eastern edge of LCA G12. There are very few domestic and micro developments within the National Park.

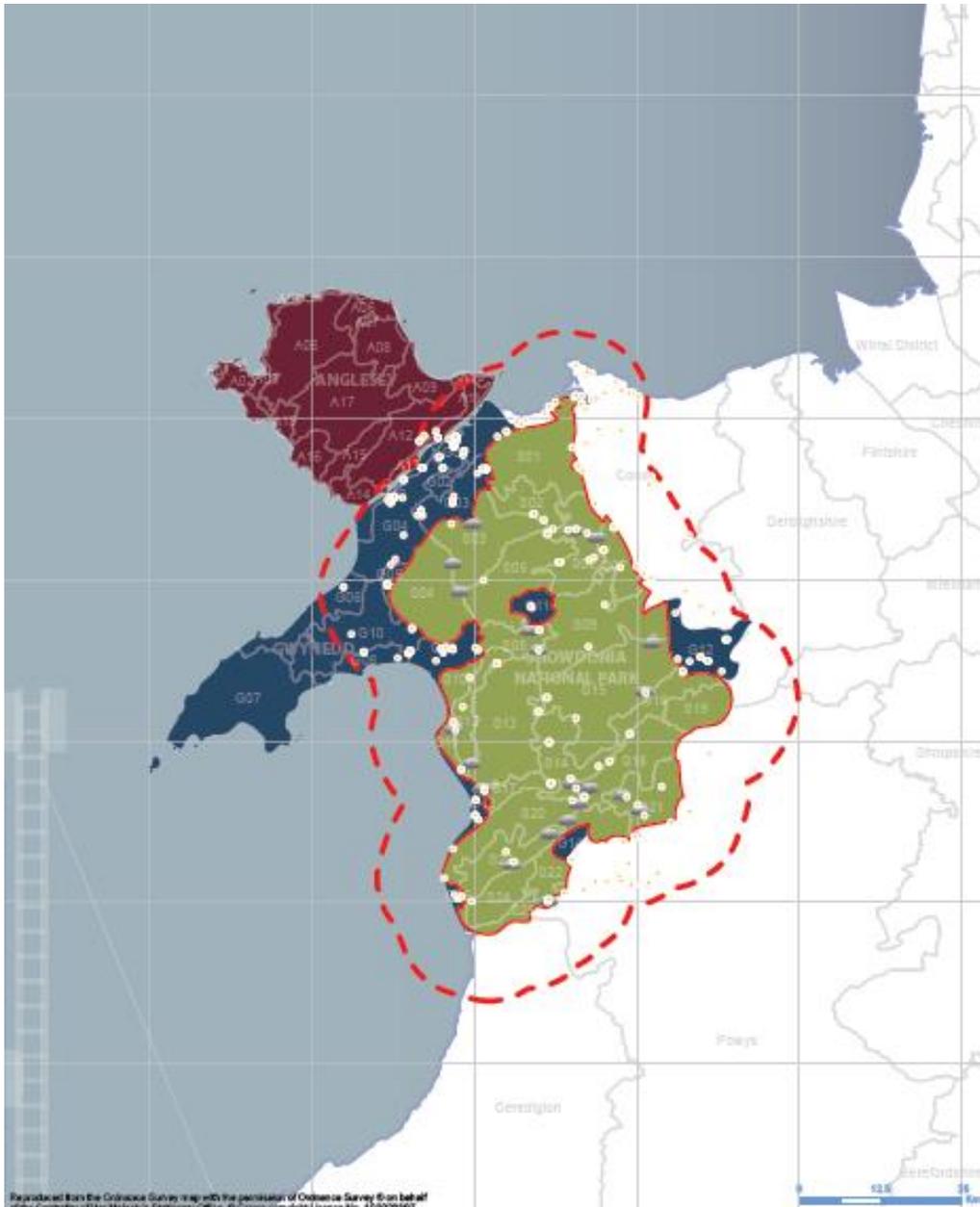
- 2.19 There are several notable areas of wind energy development outside the study area; these are as follows:
- The first is to the north east of LCA S07 in and around Moel Maelogen wind farm to the east of Llanrwst in Conwy; these turbines are visible from parts of Snowdonia National Park.
  - The second is a cluster of micro to medium scale wind energy developments just north of LCA G12, to the south of Cerrigydrudion in Conwy.
  - The third comprises the wind farms associated with SSA A (Clogaenog Forest), which lies within 15 km of the study area to the east. This location, together with that identified to the north of Anglesey represents the densest cluster of wind energy developments within the study area and buffer. Some of the turbines are visible from parts of Snowdonia National Park.
  - The fourth comprises the wind farms associated with SSA B (Carno North), which roughly lies within 20 km of the study area. Some of the turbines are visible from parts of Snowdonia National Park.
- 2.20 In some areas (in particular to the north of Anglesey), the presence of existing wind energy developments as an existing feature in the landscape, somewhat reduces the sensitivity of the landscape to that particular type of development. However, the capacity for new development has to be carefully considered to avoid the occurrence of cumulative landscape and visual effects.



**Figure 2.1** - Operational and consented wind energy developments shown within the study area and 35 km buffer; including existing and proposed offshore wind energy developments

## Operational and Consented Mobile Mast Developments

- 2.21 Operational and consented mobile mast, telecommunication infrastructure developments are dispersed throughout the study area for mobile mast developments (the study area encompasses the National Park) but these are typically focussed along major road networks and settlements. There are more notable concentrations around Betws-y-Coed to the north east and Dolgellau to the south.
- 2.23 As well as the traditional lattice and monopole style mobile masts there are also a number of camouflaged masts concentrated along the coastline and to the south of the National Park.



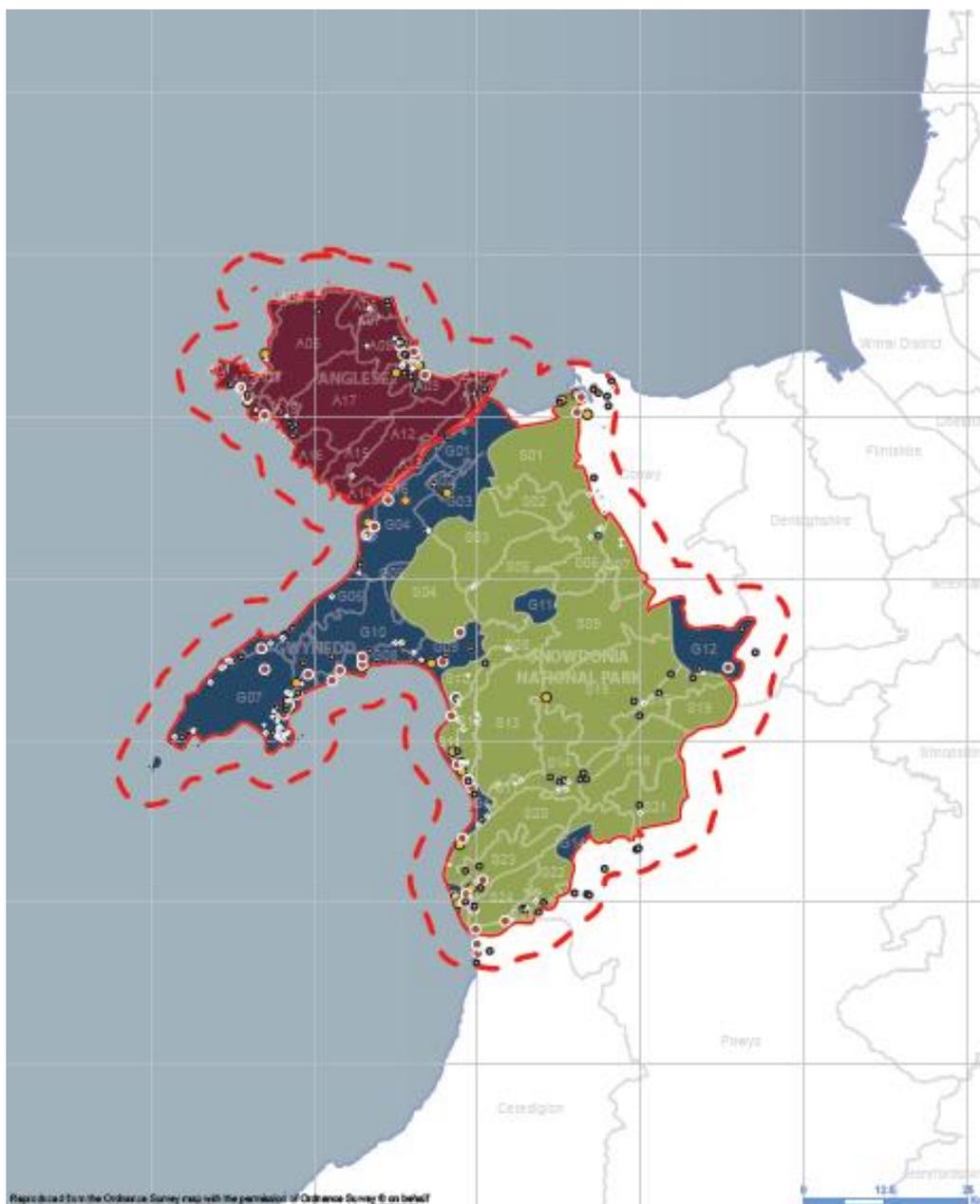
**Figure 2.2** - Operational and consented mobile mast developments shown within the study area and 10 km buffer.

## Operational and Consented Static Caravan/Chalet Park Developments

- 2.24 Operational and consented caravan/chalet park developments are typically located along the coastlines of the study area (encompassing all of Anglesey, Gwynedd and Snowdonia).
- Within Snowdonia, smaller clusters, but frequently of a large to very large size, are found along the coast, particularly close to Harlech and Coed Ystumgwern. Inland, groups of smaller developments

can be found along the banks of the Afon Dysynni at Brynchrug and along the Afon Wnion at Dolgellau. Further clusters can be found at Llŷn Tegid and again at the popular tourist destination of Betws-y-coed.

- 2.25 Outside of the study area, operational and consented caravan/chalet park developments tend to be concentrated to the south along the Afon Dyfi and to the north east of the study area on the banks of the Afon Conwy, with larger clusters to be found close to the popular tourist towns of Conwy and Llanrwst.



**Figure 2.3** - Operational and consented static caravan/chalet park developments shown within the study area and 5 km buffer.