



Waterfold Lane, Heap Bridge
[Landscape Appraisal]
August 2025

Waterfold Lane, Heap Bridge: Introduction

This landscape appraisal has been produced in respect of the proposed redevelopment of the site located off Waterfold Lane in Heap Bridge, Heywood.

The document consists of the following parts;

- Part 01 : Site Context
- Part 02 : Landscape Strategy

Part 03: Viewpoint Photographs and Conclusion

The site lies immediately West of Heap Bridge and East of the M66 within the Greenbelt. The site is also bound on the North by the River Roch. It was this river that powered Waterfold Mill that formerly occupied the site. Some features of the historic mill are still evident on site.

Views in to the site are largely screened from view due to the adjacent M66 corridor, the undulating topography of the landscape and the woodland planting along the site boundaries and therefore the proposed development will have a minimal impact on the wider landscape. This will be explored further in Part 03 of this report.

The proposed development proposes a total of 30 properties: 6no. houses that will front onto Waterfold Lane and an apartment block to the rear consisting of 12no. 3P2B flats and 12no. 2P1B flats. The proposed built form has been developed by Equilibrium Architects and an accompanying report exploring the approach has been produced and should be read in conjunction with this appraisal.

This document provides detail on the points raised above, demonstrating the landscape context in which the site sits, assessing the potential impact of views from the identified viewpoints. The appraisal method is outlined in Appendix A of this report. The assessment ends with an overall conclusion that summarises the degree of landscape and visual impact of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape and the surrounding Greenbelt.





Part 01 Site Context

The following chapter sets out an analysis of the surrounding landscape to determine the character and setting of the development site. The analysis involves detailed mapping of local landscape designations, character areas, access routes and visual receptors.

Figure 01: Designations



- Site Boundary
- 2km Radius
- 500m Radius
- Greenbelt
- Hollins Brook Nature Reserve
- Scheduled Ancient Monument
- Listed Building

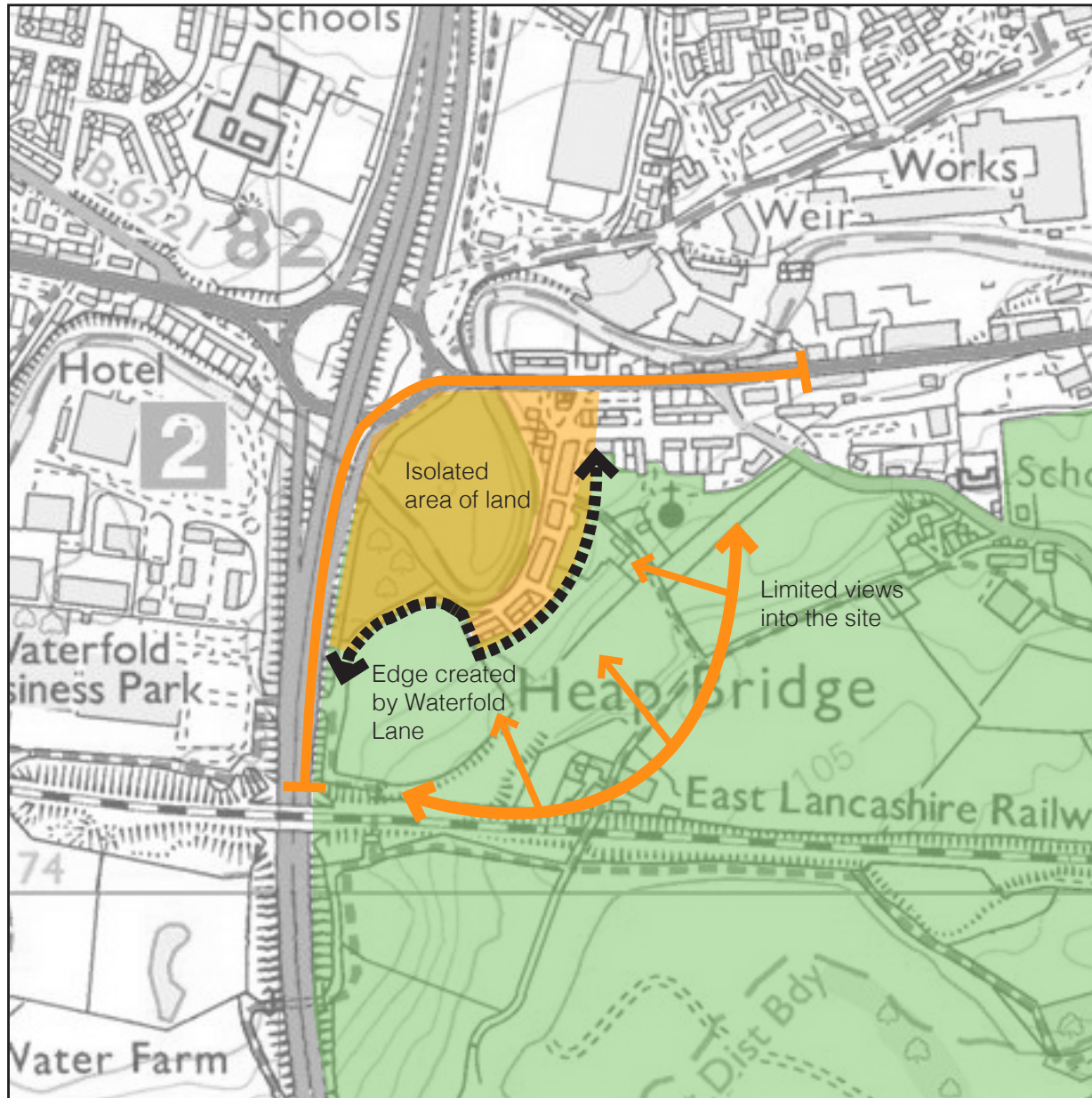
The plan on the left illustrates the key designations within and around the study area. The site is on the edge of the development boundary of Bury and Heap Bridge.

The most notable designation that affects the site is the Greenbelt. As shown on the figure here, the site is located within a swathe that separates Darn Hill with the larger Heywood area from Heap Bridge with the larger Bury area. The edge of this belt is largely defined by the M66 that runs to the West of the site. Locally the Green Belt is also defined by the River Roch running to the North.

Importantly, the Greenbelt designation in the immediate vicinity of the site is a peninsula of land that feels disconnected from the main Greenbelt area to the south and east.

As figure 01 illustrates, there are a significant number of listed properties towards the centre of Bury and a Scheduled Ancient Monument in the centre, Bury Castle. Hollins Brook Nature Reserve is located around 2km to the South.

Figure 01a: Greenbelt



The plan on the left provides further detail on the Greenbelt designation and the change in character noted within the proposed development site in comparison to the land to the south and east.

- As highlighted earlier, there is a limited visual envelope to the development site due to the rising ground to the south. On this basis any development of the site will have a minimal impact on the openness of the Greenbelt in this location.
- The site and the land to the north, shares a character with the existing housing on Waterfold Lane (area shaded orange) rather than the agricultural land to the south and subsequently feels visually disconnected from this area of Greenbelt.
- Any development of the Greenbelt in this area would have a minimal impact on the wider open countryside would not contribute to the merging of towns or urban areas given the adjacency and containment provided by the housing to Waterfold Lane.

Figure 02: Access



- Site Boundary
- 2km Radius
- 500m Radius
- Motorway
- A Road
- B Road
- Roads generally over 4m
- Railway
- Bridleway
- Public Footpath

The plan on the left illustrates key access routes within the study area. The site is accessed Waterfold Lane, a road that follows the River Roch from the A58 that connects to Heywood to the East and Bury to the West.

Notably, the M66 runs along the western boundary of the site with connections to Manchester to the South and onto wider motorway links nationally.

There are a number of public footpaths that are scattered throughout the study area. Locally, these footpaths extend to connect neighbouring developments.

As figure 02 shows, the East Lancashire Railway runs close to the South of the site. The closest station to the site is Bury Station approximately 1.8km to the west.

Figure 03: Visual Envelope and Viewpoint Locations



- Site Boundary
- 2km Radius
- 500m Radius
- Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)
- Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI)
- Viewpoint Locations

Four viewpoints have been selected based on a selection of significant places within the study such as public footpaths, roads and designations.

As the Zone of Visual Influence on figure 03 suggests, views into the site are extremely local, within a 500m radius of the site. Due to the low elevation of the site in relation to its surroundings and the boundary woodland to the M66, the visual envelope of the proposed development is contained with little or no visibility in or out of the site beyond this area. On this basis, the impact of development on the wider Greenbelt is minimal.

An analysis of these viewpoints is set out in Part 03 of this document.

Viewpoint Sensitivity Scale: *see appendix A for detailed criteria*

- Low:** Users of main roads travelling at speed
- Medium:** Users of local roads with low speed and traffic
- High:** Tourist destinations and users of paths and recreational routes

Figure 04: Land Use Typologies



- Site Boundary
- 2km Radius
- 500m Radius
- Agricultural & Undeveloped/Unoccupied
- Industrial
- Waste Management
- Residential
- Commercial

The plan on the left illustrates the broad Land Use Typologies, these areas have been gathered from an understanding of use both on the ground and from a desktop analysis of use and function of land areas.

Shown in blue, the majority of the land use within the study area is residential, between these areas there are swathes of agricultural & undeveloped/unoccupied plots that separate developments.

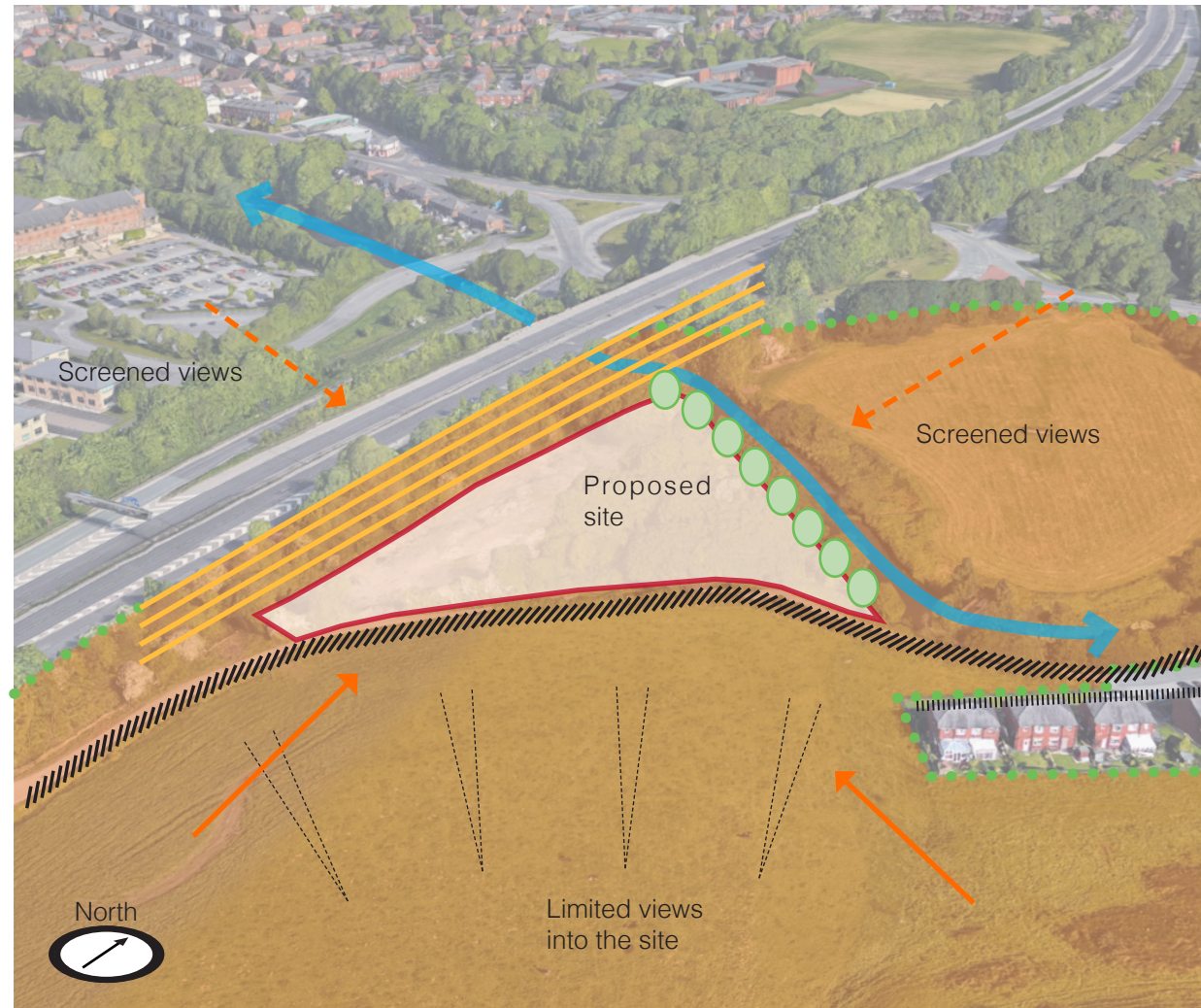
Towards the edges occupied urban areas there are regions of industrial land. In addition to these areas there are two large waste management sites shown in red - these areas are former quarries that have been used for land fill and are in the process of being capped and managed within the Greenbelt designation.



Part 02 Landscape Strategy

This chapter details the design proposals, including general layout, planting approach and ecological enhancements. Following the analysis of the local area, the landscape strategy serves to enhance the setting and character of the surrounding landscape through the implementation of the landscape strategy.

Existing Site: Opportunities and Constraints



The plan on the left illustrates the key attributes of the site that have been considered during the development of the proposed design. These key attributes include:

- Views, indicated in orange, from the North and West, are screened by both the M66 and intervening vegetation between the site and any visual receptors.
- As shown in yellow lines, there is a dense vegetation screening between the site and M66. Shown in the Green ovals, there is also mature vegetation to the boundary with the River Roch - both of these edges could be maintained and enhanced to reduce any visual impact.
- The topography of the surrounding area to the south falls toward the site, and as such there are views to be considered from this direction.
- Given the location and screening of the boundaries, and the definition of Waterfold Lane, the site has a negligible impact on the wider Greenbelt (shown in orange). As highlighted earlier in this report, the site feels disconnected from the wider Greenbelt to the south and east.
- The existing residential development along Waterfold Lane creates a strong street frontage that could be used to continue along the road towards the site.

Existing Site: Surrounding Areas

Existing vegetation along river shields views to neighbouring properties

Horizon limits any far reaching views into surrounding countryside

Dense vegetation between site and adjacent M66



Neighbouring agricultural land separated by river

Glimpses between trees to Heap Bridge Industrial area

Neighbouring properties form frontage facing towards the River Roch

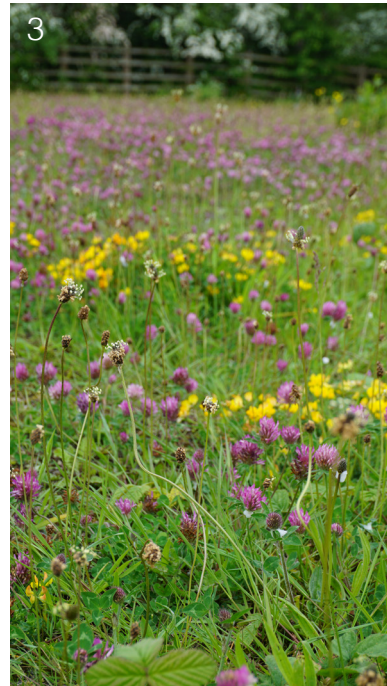


Existing Site: Current Site Character and Features



Whilst on site it is evident that the site has previously been developed, with a number of features visible and present from the past built form including areas of hard standing, stone slab flooring and stone cobbles.

1. A dominant feature of the site is the mature vegetation that lines site on the east, north and west boundaries of the site. As shown in this image the vegetation is dense on the boundary screening the adjacent M66.
2. The existing groundplane of the site is dotted with features of the previous development. shown here with the gritstone cobble setts, possibly indicating the location of a road between buildings on the site.
3. The interior of the site is largely open with only low lying scrub vegetation contained within the main areas.
4. The River Roch run along the north eastern boundary of the site creating a character to the site. Vegetation varies along this boundary with open, exposed grassland and dense, mature vegetation with a variety of tree species.



Proposal: Illustrative Design Layout



Proposal: Landscape Led SuDS Strategy



There are a number of sustainable drainage solutions that can be implemented within the scope of development proposals, some of which have been explored and introduced into the strategy scheme as shown on the diagram here. This strategy is dependent on the results of any ground investigations. Sequentially these are as follows:

1. Reduction of handstanding allows for more opportunities for infiltration within the landscape.
2. Use of permeable surfaces and materials where appropriate to reduce surface water run-off.
3. Where surface water run-off does occur, smaller dry swales will catch and direct water to on-site solutions.
4. Green roofs could be explored on flat roof elements to slow down the impact during high rainfall & have some attenuation.
5. Surface water from the roofs can be directed to a larger series of swales that will provide an opportunity for infiltration.
6. A linked series of surface water management and treatment could be discharged from a single location into the River Roch.



Proposal: Character & Material



Active Street Frontage & Courtyard



Integrated swales



Native parkland/street trees

The images to the left reflect the character we envisage the proposed development to portray.

With an already substantial amount of woodland planting along the boundaries of the site, the proposed development will supplement this with swathes of wildflower meadow and groups of native woodland trees interplanted to help screen views and develop a sense of place for residents.

Informal walking routes will also be located throughout the proposed development and woodland areas. Creative reuse of existing site materials could be explored, particularly the reuse of the gritstone setts as pedestrian crossings.

Areas of the proposed development will have shared access and, as such, active frontages and courtyard spaces will be important to bring life to spaces and encourage passive ownership with residents.

Sustainable surface water management will be implemented across the site as explored on the previous page of this report, visibly using elements such as swales and attenuation basins to manage water flow.



Part 03 Viewpoint Photographs

This chapter provides an analysis of the selected viewpoints within a 500m and 2km radius of the site. The overall visual impact on each viewpoint will be identified following an assessment of the wider context of the view and its susceptibility to change, combined with the receptor sensitivity as identified on figure 03.

Viewpoint 01: View from Waterfold Lane, looking East



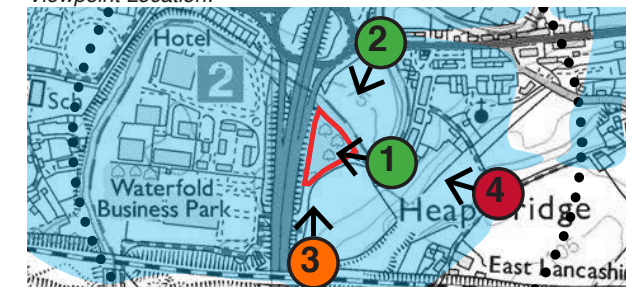
Viewpoint 01 is taken from Waterfold Lane approximately 100m to the east of the site. It is representative of pedestrians and motorists travelling along the road in a westerly direction.

The view is bound largely by the hedgerows either side of the road and the mature vegetation that lines the M66 along the far edge of the site. The ground plane of the site is currently an open expanse that is proposed to be developed, this viewpoint will largely be occupied by the terrace block of housing that will reflect the scale and materials of the neighbouring housing adjacent to this viewpoint location with linear elements facing the road.

The proposals will alter the view, however, the receptor sensitivity is low and this view would previously have been dominated by the mill.

Overall visual impact of Viewpoint 01: *Slight

Viewpoint Location:



Viewpoint Number : 01
Lense Focal Length : 35mm
Direction : East

Waterfold Lane, Heap Bridge

Viewpoint 02: View from Heap Bridge, A58, looking South

Approximate extent of site



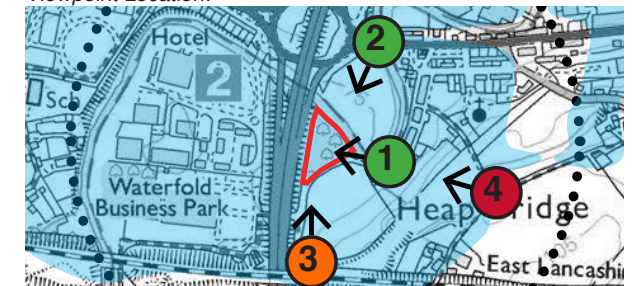
Viewpoint 02 is taken from the A58 approximately 250m to the north of the site. It is representative of pedestrians and motorists travelling along the road and pavement.

The view towards the site is limited by intervening vegetation, but some glimpse views through the trees are possible. It is possible to see the retaining stone wall of the former mill on the river bank with mature vegetation along the banks of the M66 in the distance.

The sensitivity of the visual receptor in this location would be low, given that vehicles are approaching a busy roundabout and focus will be on the road ahead. Where possible, there will be a noticeable change to this frontage of the site with tree planting being utilised to mitigate greater visual impact.

Overall visual impact of Viewpoint 01: Negligible

Viewpoint Location:



Viewpoint Number : 02
Lense Focal Length : 35mm
Direction : South

Waterfold Lane, Heap Bridge

Viewpoint 03: View from Public Footpath adjacent to East Lancashire Railway Line, looking North

Approximate extent of site



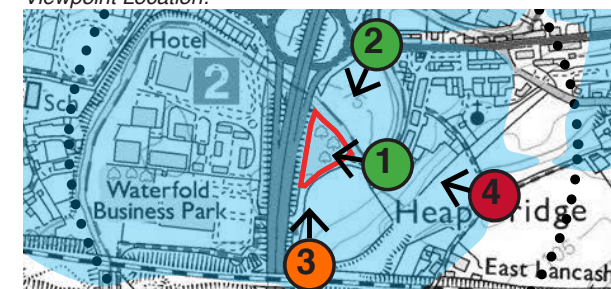
Viewpoint 03 is taken from the furthest extent of Waterfold Lane, also a public footpath, approximately 300m to the south, before it passes under the railway line and the site is out of view.

The viewpoint consists of open agricultural fields in the foreground and on the rolling hills along the horizon. The site is located on the near side of the mature vegetation along the edge of the M66.

The majority of the development would be sitting behind extensive tree planting around the proposed southern car parking area and as such, once mature, only glimpsed views of the built form would be possible from this location. The sensitivity of the receptor would be medium and the scale of change would be low once the vegetation matures.

Overall visual impact of Viewpoint 03: *Slight

Viewpoint Location:



Viewpoint Number : 03
Lense Focal Length : 35mm
Direction : North

Waterfold Lane, Heap Bridge

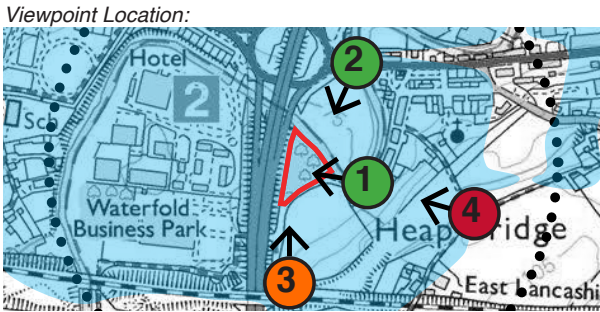
Viewpoint 04: View from a Public Footpath, looking West



Viewpoint 04 is taken from a public footpath above Heap Bridge approximately 400m to the East of the site. This viewpoint is the furthest distance from which the proposals would be visible from and clearly shows the change in character to the north of Waterfold Lane.

The views are far reaching given the elevation and in the mid ground consists of glimpses of rooftops and built form with interspersed tree canopies between them as the view extends towards the horizon. Any development of the site will be seen in the context of built form in front of and behind the proposals from this viewpoint. Whilst the receptor sensitivity here would be high, the scale of effects would be low. The proposed development would reflect the scale and material palette of the surrounding buildings and, combined with tree planting, would become a minor constituent of the view.

Overall visual impact of Viewpoint 04: *Slight



Viewpoint Number : 04
Lense Focal Length : 35mm
Direction : West

Conclusion:

This report has assessed the potential impact of the development of the site along Waterfold Lane in Heap Bridge and assessed the potential impact of the proposed changes on the wider landscape and the surrounding Greenbelt. The report has identified the footpath network, designations that lie within 2km of the site so that an accurate and representative assessment can be made for this planning application submission.

A key point to note is the Zone of Visual Influence on the site is only visible from a very limited area because of the M66 along the Western boundary and the steeply undulating topography to the south and eastern aspects. This limitation of views restricts how much of an impact any development here would have on the surrounding landscape and the Greenbelt in particular. As such, a large part of this report has focussed on appraising any potential impact within a 500m study area, whilst still generally considering the impact it would have up to 2km.

As highlighted within the report, the Greenbelt immediately surrounding the site feels disconnected from the wider designated landscape. The Greenbelt in this location projects in a northerly direction to form a peninsula bounded by the M66 to the west and by the existing housing on Waterfold Lane to the east. This projection, in our opinion, reduces its strength creating a section of land (including the proposed site) that is disconnected from the wider designation and more closely associated with the existing housing to Waterfold Lane. Furthermore, the M66 has a lot of influence locally; visually and aurally this does reduce the sensitivity of the landscape by reducing the tranquility and quality of the environment.

The proposed site plan and residential accommodation has been developed to reduce its impact on the Greenbelt to the south whilst reflecting the neighbouring built form, particularly with the linear block of houses fronting onto Waterfold Lane and the former Mill. The landscape strategy and site layout proposes areas of mixed native woodland trees located at strategic points that will reduce the impact and scale of the development on the Greenbelt to the south. Given the proximity to the River Roch, it is also important that the proposals enhance bio-diversity and demonstrate a landscape-led approach to water management.

The overall conclusion of this assessment is that the site is not in a sensitive location due to its surrounding context and the M66 corridor in particular. Whilst the site is visible from a small number of viewpoints, it will have a minimal impact on the openness and setting of the Greenbelt. This is reinforced by the design approach taken to the site that specifically draws on the local vernacular for its form, enhances bio-diversity and establishes a landscape led drainage strategy.

In our opinion, this combination of the landscape setting and the approach taken to the design of the site will enable the proposals to have a positive impact on the wider landscape setting and the Greenbelt in particular.

Appendix A: Visual Appraisal Methodology

Visual Receptor Sensitivity Appraisal:

Category	Visual Receptor Criteria
High: <i>Observers whose attention or interest may be focused on the landscape and recognised views in particular.</i>	- Recognised / Important Viewpoints, including those identified within and protected by policy. These viewpoints may be tourist destinations and marked on maps. - Residential Properties - Users of Rights of Way, Recreational Trails or land with public access (i.e. Open Access Land and National Trust Land) whose interest is primarily focused on the landscape
Medium: <i>Views of the landscape are part of, but not the sole purpose of the receptors' activities.</i>	- Those playing or participating at outdoor sports or undertaking formal outdoor recreation. - Users of local roads where there are clear / open views across the landscape, low speeds and low levels of traffic.
Low: <i>Attention is focused upon the activity of the receptor and not upon the wider views.</i>	- Users of main roads travelling at speed, or local roads where the focus is upon the road ahead owing to traffic conditions and the context / composition of views. - Places of Work

Visual Magnitude Criteria:

Category	Scale of Effects
High	The proposed development will be clearly noticeable and the view would be fundamentally altered by its presence.
Medium	The proposed development will form a new and recognisable element within the view which is likely to be recognised by the receptor.
Low	The proposed development will form a minor constituent of the view being partially visible or at sufficient distance to be a small component.
Negligible	Virtually imperceptible change to existing views and visual amenity.

The **magnitude of the change** to a view has been made by way of consideration of the following factors:

Size or scale; taking into account change with respect to loss or additions of features in the view and changes in its composition, including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposals. In addition the degree of contrast or integration with any new features or changes in the landscape in terms of form, scale and mass, line, height, colour and texture are considered. Finally the nature of the view is considered e.g. full, partial or glimpsed;

Geographical extent will vary in relation to the main activity of the receptor; the **distance** of the viewpoint from the proposed development and the **extent of the area** over which the changes would be visible.

Appendix A: Visual Appraisal Methodology

Overall Visual Impact Appraisal:

An initial indication of impact significance (which can be either adverse or beneficial) was gained by combining sensitivity and magnitude in accordance with the matrix below. However, it should be noted that this provides an indication of the likely impact arising from the assessment of magnitude and sensitivity. Given that the criteria represent levels of a continuum or continuous gradation, professional judgement and awareness of the relative balance of importance between sensitivity and magnitude is also required.

A * is marked next to a significance rating in the assessment text where the outcome does not follow the significance rating determined by combining sensitivity and magnitude using the below matrix. The matrix is used as a guide, however, professional judgement is also required and in some scenarios this outcome will differ slightly to the matrix.

	MAGNITUDE OF IMPACT				
RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
	High	Major	Major	Moderate	Slight
	Medium	Major	Moderate	Slight	Negligible
	Low	Moderate	Slight	Negligible	Negligible
	Negligible	Slight	Negligible	Negligible	Negligible