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Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment

For the provision of services

By

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For

Watergrove CGI

Ramsden Farm, Middleton
M24 1ZB

Report produced by H Newhall CMLI, November 2021
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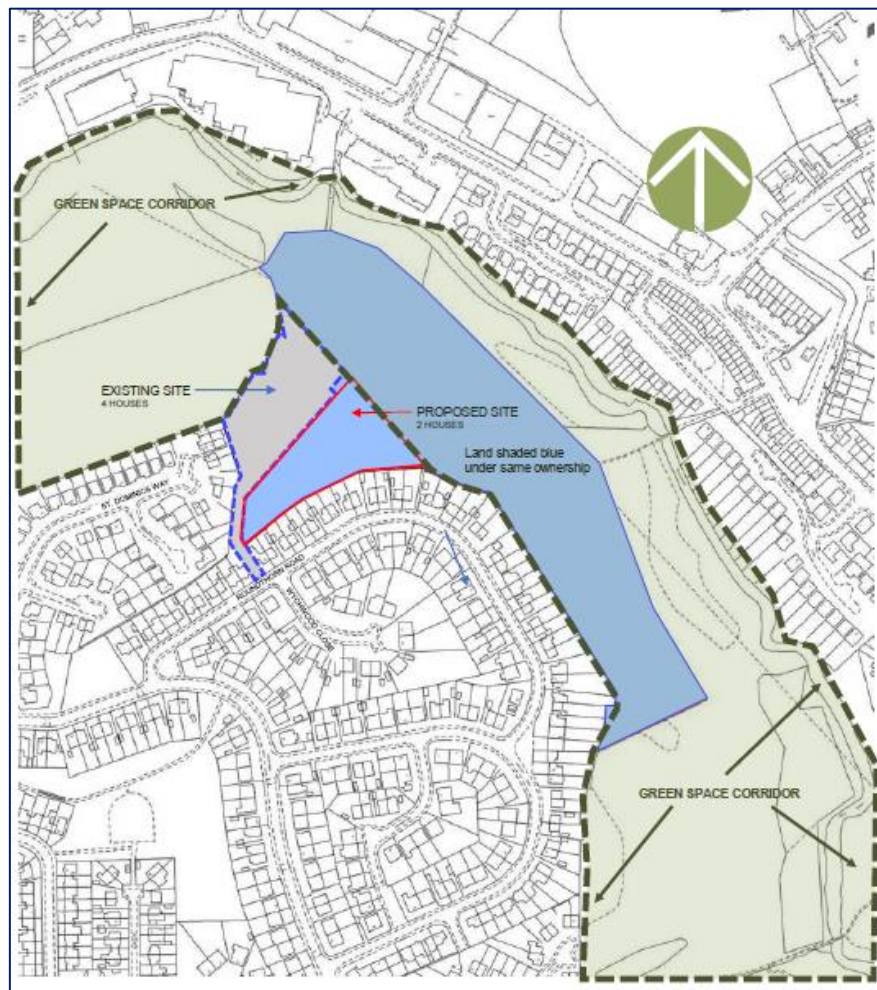


Figure 1: Site Location Plan: Ramsden Farm, Middleton

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All efforts have been made to ensure the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment provides an unbiased assessment of the impacts of the proposed development upon the surrounding landscape. While the study aims to address the views from the clusters of dwellings and properties within the specified proximity of the site, the individual views of each and every property cannot be evaluated independently.

All photographs have been taken from publicly accessible locations following the Landscape Institute (LI) recommendations, with the aim of providing the most reasonable representation of average views from the properties within a defined geographical area. Views from upper stories of buildings can only be estimated, while reasonable suggestions about the impacts upon these properties are evaluated based upon the professional judgment of the individuals carrying out the study. The report is written by a chartered landscape architect with a view to providing the reader with an impartial assessment of the impacts.

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1. Preamble

To ensure the reader fully comprehends the assessment and judgments made within; the assessor must first make a brief series of statements. These explain the concepts and theories behind the methodology and how the judgements were derived by the assessor.

It is recognised from the outset that there is a difference between the **significance** of a landscape or visual effect and its **importance**. It is notable that a **significant visual effect** would arise principally through the result of change or changes which are reflected in the composition of existing views. Prior to setting out the methodology of the LVIA it is necessary to provide the reader with the fundamental theories applied in the study that have guided the assessor in making the judgments that are outlined later in this report. This assessment is based on the approach advocated by the guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment outlined by the Institute of Landscape Architects¹. These guidelines are not site specific, and the assessment has been tailored to the specific requirements of the proposal. The LVIA aims to provide an outline of the method and assessment with reference to established guidance.

Primarily it is worth noting that the term **‘landscape’** can be easily misunderstood and therefore we need to decipher what exactly is meant when we use the word. The Oxford English Dictionary explains that *Landscape* is; **“All the visible features of an area of land, often considered in terms of aesthetic appeal.”** This definition lacks clarity and therefore people working in the industry such as statutory bodies (Including; English Heritage, National England, CPRE and others) have accepted that for the purposes of convention; **“‘landscape’ means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.”**

We are now presented with two further principal components; **character and perception** which need further analysis in the quest for a plausible understanding of the term ‘landscape’. Essentially land which has not experienced a ‘human filter’ is nothing more than land. So to create a landscape we require ‘human perception’ and personal beliefs which define an individual idea of character. With an understanding of the term ‘landscape,’ we need to address the subjectivity involved in recognising landscape character. The paragraph below illustrates the subjective nature when conducting an evaluation of landscape character. The key factor relates to the human filter which perceives visual information and presents the individual with an understanding of the visual component of amenity.

‘There has been a long-standing debate about the role of objectivity and subjectivity in dealing with landscape. The search for supposedly objective approaches has reflected a desire, in some quarters, to remove the element of personal judgment from the process. In landscape character assessment, it is accepted that there is a role for subjective inputs, but these must be made in a systematic and transparent way.’ (SNH/CA LCA Guidance; 7.4, 2.11) ‘Surveying the elements that make up the landscape, mapping and describing landscape types, which many might consider to be wholly objective matters, can still involve subjective judgments.

This can only be avoided if the whole tasks were to be reduced to one of measuring attributes from maps and analysing the data quantitatively (but this approach would not tease out all aspects of character and sense of place). To illustrate this point, a surveyor could record that there are 20 hectares of woodland in the landscape as an objective fact; to then record that this woodland is a dominant feature or fundamental characteristic of the landscape necessarily introduces an element of subjectivity into the characterisation.’ (SNH/CA LCA Guidance; 7.4, 2.12) In other words, as soon as ‘descriptors’ are brought into the frame of reference, we engage with subjectivity.

When conducting any survey, including that of the LVIA, the element of subjectivity comes to the forefront. Survey methods can deal relatively easily with recording the various elements that make up the landscape

¹ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Assessment Management, 2002.

character and their relative significance. It is important, however, to give equal attention to the more experiential and, therefore, subjective aspects, of the landscape aesthetics, and perceptual dimensions of landscape character. The recognition that perception is central to understanding landscape character must, therefore, be paralleled by the recognition that it is also fundamental to the appreciation of the visual component of amenity.

The individual response to change could range from strongly negative through to strongly positive with residents and those engaged in outdoor recreation most sensitive to change. Human perceptions of (in this case) a small housing development are, therefore, neither “right” or “wrong” and responses to the change experienced when a development takes place can range from strongly positive to strongly negative.

It is important to note that while the baseline methodology may help to identify landscape (and/or visual) effects and the locations most at risk, the question remains; ‘does it matter?’ At this point, the assessor is required to determine the importance of the landscape or receptor and, while respecting the level of subjectivity involved, decipher for whom this may be important.

Character is therefore, a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in a landscape that make one landscape different from another as opposed to a better or worse experience. Based on an understanding of the objectivity involved in describing the character of the landscape the assessor has used best practice guidance to evaluate the changes which would take place both during and after the development and provide the reader with the best possible, unbiased review of impacts.

2. Background to the Report

1.1. Introduction

This report describes the findings of a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared in support of a planning application by Watergrove CGI which seeks permission for 2 dwellings at Ramsden Farm, set at right angles to the existing four houses on the site. The ridge height of the proposed houses is 9m and the site comprises of 1.15 hectares, of which 0.5 ha comprises 4 existing houses (Application Ref: 16/01302/FUL) an additional 0.15 ha for 2 proposed houses and the remainder of the site 0.4 ha being devoted to enhancing the landscape and ecological value of the area.

This document contains more detailed information on the policy context and landscape character of the surrounding area.

The purpose of the appraisal is to identify and evaluate the potential change in the composition and structure of the existing landscape and the degree of visual change resulting from this development. Proposals for the site have been produced and it is against these that the landscape and visual effects have been assessed.

1.2. Scope

The LVIA defines the extent of the study area and describes the key features, components and characteristics that contribute to the quality and perception of the landscape.

The LVIA considers the potential effects of the development upon:

- Individual landscape features and elements;
- Landscape character and;
- Visual amenity and the people who view the landscape.

The main objectives of the LVIA are as follows:

- To describe and evaluate the current landscape character of the site and its surroundings and to identify any notable landscape features within the site;
- To determine the sensitivity of the landscape to the type of development proposed;
- To identify and describe any changes arising from the project relating to landscape and visual issues. This is defined as the magnitude of change;
- To identify and describe any mitigation measures that have been included;
- To identify and assess any cumulative landscape and visual effects and;
- To assess the significance of residual landscape and visual effects.

It considers the potential impacts arising from the proposed scheme on the existing landscape and visual amenity, both during the period of construction and once the development is completed.

Proposed developments within the study area boundary are included in this study. The main receptors and viewpoints of the proposed changes are outlined.

Landscape character and visual impact assessments are two separate but interlinked procedures. Landscape impacts primarily derive from modifications to the physical landscape, which may give rise to changes in character and how this is perceived and experienced by users. Visual impacts relate to changes arising from the modification of the composition of views as a result of changes to the landscape, to people's responses to the changes, and the overall effects in respect of visual amenity.

The report discusses the landscape mitigation and landscape enhancement proposals that are included in the Landscaping Plan Aug 21.

The LVIA outlines any residual impacts that may remain, post mitigation, and describes their significance in accordance with defined impact criteria.

Finally, all engagement that has currently been carried out with interested parties, statutory and non-statutory consultees and members of the public will be described.

1.3. Assessment area

An area up to 2km from the proposed site boundary has been assessed. See **Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)** and **Assessment Area Plan** in Appendix 2.

2. Context and Planning

2.1. National and European Environmental Legislation

Statutes providing guidance on the protection of landscapes including those with recognised scenic quality and which are directly relevant to the LVIA include:

- The Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA), 1990;
- The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949;
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA), 1981;
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROWA), 2000;
- The Hedgerow Regulations, 1997;
- The Environment Act, 1995;
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC), 2006;
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations, 2010.

2.2. Designations

2.2.1. Statutory designations

According to DEFRA's (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) MAGIC (MultiAgency Geographic Information for the Countryside) database, there are the following statutory designations within a 2km radius of the proposed site:

Ecology

There is one Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and one designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the 2km radius study area. There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) or Special Protection Areas (SPA) within the 2km radius study area around the site. (See Appendix 3).

Culture and History

There are thirty five Listed Buildings within 2km of the proposed development site, some of which are in clusters and there is Conservation Areas in central Middleton. Their locations are shown in Appendix 3 and there are further details in section 4.5.

2.2.2. Non statutory designations

The site lies within the Pennine Edge community forest and a small area of the Liverpool, Manchester and West Yorks Greenbelt is situated in the North East of the study area.

There are no Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) within 2km of the proposed development site and there are no designated landscapes within 2kms of the proposed development site. There is a Community Nature Reserve next to the development, along Ince Brook.

2.3. Land Use

The proposed development site is not considered to have been developed previously.

2.4. Planning Guidance

2.4.1. National Planning Policy Framework

To complete a comprehensive LVIA, reference has been made to the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012, revised July 2021) which sets out national land use planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. It provides the policy framework for the preparation of local authority development plans. The following extracts are highlighted to draw attention to policies potentially affecting this site and the proposed development.

“Section 12. Achieving well-designed places

126. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

The proposals are designed to integrate with the surrounding area, creating pleasant surroundings for site users and mitigating any potential visual impact.

“Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

175. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework⁵⁸; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries”.

Habitats and biodiversity

179. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

(a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁶¹; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation⁶²; and

(b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”

Much of the proposed development site consists of bare ground, ephemeral/ short perennial plants, with a swathe of improved grassland and some shrubs, a hedgerow, and scattered trees towards the southern boundary.

2.5. Planning context of proposals

The application has been informed by a number of design principles and objectives which are set out in more detail in the supporting Planning Design Statement.

The proposed development is situated within the areas of the site which are of least environmental or amenity value (Section 15, 175 above).

Section 12, 126 (above) states that “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development” and the newly proposed houses will be in a similar style and high quality to those previously built adjacent to them.

Section 15, 179 (above) states that in order to “protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity (a)”, areas of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks should be identified and safeguarded and (b) the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and ecological networks should be promoted in order to pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. The Design Layout and Landscape & Ecological Enhancement Proposals (Aug 2021) which draw on suggestions from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (May 2021) include proposals to increase the biodiversity and visual appeal of the bank in the southerly part of the proposed development through the planting of perennial and annual wildflowers in this area. The planting of native tree and shrub species on the north eastern side of the proposed development site, between the rear gardens of the proposed houses and Wince Brook Valley will enhance the biodiversity of the area and improve its value as an ecological corridor, over time.

With regard to this Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, the following excerpt from the Officer Report relating to the planning application for the first four houses, is of interest. “As a result of this orientation and the screening provided by existing surrounding properties, the proposed dwelling would not be readily visible from surrounding public vantage points. Instead, the site occupies a secluded location which is not read within the same context as the surrounding streets”. Obviously this relates to a previous application with a proposal for the development of four houses at 90 degrees to the currently proposed two houses, however, this does echo the findings of the chartered landscape architect and their team, in relation to the current proposal. Apart from viewpoints in immediate proximity to the proposed development, there are very few places where the proposed development would be seen as clear change to the scale and make up of the surrounding area.

3. Approach and Methodology

3.1. Assessment Guidelines

- *Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition)*, published by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA);

3.2. Key Stages

- Recording and analysis of the existing landscape character including definition of the visual envelope and the Zone of Theoretical Visibility –ZTV.
- An appreciation of the nature, forms and features of the proposed scheme.
- Identification of components of the landscape likely to be affected by the scheme and identification of the viewpoints and visual receptors.
- Identification and description of the different effects on the landscape and visual amenity that are predicted to occur, evaluated in terms of their magnitude, geographical extent, duration and reversibility.
- An evaluation of the significance of the landscape and visual effects, identified sensitivity of the landscape receptors to the development and their importance reflected in the value attached to the landscape.
- Identification of the mitigation measures appropriate to the proposed scheme.
- Identification of the enhancement measures to the landscape.
- An assessment of the residual effects on the landscape character and visual amenity.

3.3. Assessment Methods

The LVIA has been based upon an evaluation of the sensitivity of the receiving landscape and visual receptors, and the magnitude of change associated with the introduction of this additional area of residential dwellings into the landscape and visual context of the assessment area.

3.4. Landscape Character

The description and classification of the existing landscape character has involved a review of all available landscape character assessment information from various sources including the National Character Area (NCA) 54, Manchester Pennine Fringe and Greater Manchester Character Sensitivity Report into which the site falls.

Local landscape character has been defined by taking account of geology and soils, hydrology, land cover and land use, the planning and policy context, statutory and non-statutory designations, archaeology, ecology, buildings and settlements, historic and cultural references, climate data, public rights of way, vegetation and wildlife and topography and altitude.

GLVIA3 states that with regard to scope, "An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on the landscape as a resource." The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing landscape character assessments and a description of the site and its immediate context.

A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape,
- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape,
- Combined effects of these changes.

These elements are discussed in the assessment.

The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. Judgements about the susceptibility to change are recorded on a scale of High, Medium and Low.

The value of the existing landscape is also considered. GLVIA3 indicates information that contributes to understanding landscape value. This information is set out in paragraph 5.20 of the GLVIA3 and includes:

- Information about areas recognised by statute such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Information about Heritage Coasts, where relevant;
- Local planning documents, for local landscape designations;
- Information on individual or groups of features such as conservation areas, listed buildings, unique historic or cultural sites;

- Art and literature identifying value attached to particular areas or views;
- Material on landscape of local or community interest.

Where there is no clear existing evidence on landscape value, an assessment is made based on the following factors, based on the guidance in GLVIA3:

- Landscape quality (condition);
- Scenic quality;
- Rarity;
- Representativeness;
- Conservation interest;
- Recreation value;
- Perceptual aspects;
- Associations.

The value of the landscape is recorded on a scale of High, Medium, Low and Negligible. The overall landscape sensitivity is determined by considering the susceptibility to change and the value of the landscape receptor.

The overall significance of effects is determined making judgement about two components:

- Nature of receptor likely to be affected (known by the shorthand “sensitivity”) and;
- Nature of the effect likely to occur (known by the shorthand “magnitude”).

Consideration of all these criteria feeds into a comprehensive assessment of the significance.

3.4.1. Quality

Landscape quality means the physical state of the landscape. It includes the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape from visual, functional and ecological perspectives and the condition of individual elements of the landscape. Local landscape character within a 2km assessment area has been considered based upon the following criteria:

1. **Highest Quality** - Areas comprising a clear composition of valued landscape components in robust form and health, free of disruptive visual detractors and with a strong sense of place.
2. **Very Attractive** - Areas primarily of valued landscape components combined in an aesthetically pleasing composition and lacking prominent disruptive visual detractors.
3. **Good Landscape** - Areas primarily of valued landscape components combined in an aesthetically pleasing composition with low levels of disruptive visual detractors.
4. **Ordinary Landscape Areas** - Containing some features of visual value but lacking coherent and aesthetically pleasing composition.
5. **Poor Landscape** - Areas lacking valued landscape components or comprising degraded features and lacking any aesthetically pleasing composition.

3.4.2. Value

Consideration has been given to the value of the local landscape within the 2km assessment area. Landscape value has been defined as “the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society”. It can apply to areas of landscape as a whole, or to the individual elements, features and aesthetic or perceptual dimensions which contribute to the character of the landscape. Landscapes or their component parts may be valued at the community, local, national or international levels. While landscape designations are a starting point in assessing landscape value, absence of designations may not necessarily infer a lack of quality or value.

Sensitivity to Change

Sensitivity relates to the relative ability of the landscape to respond to and, where appropriate, accommodate change of a particular type. It reflects landscape character, the nature of change and the way both are experienced and perceived.

Criteria used to define sensitivity in the LVIA are as follows:

Landscape Sensitivity Criteria	
High	Landscape character, characteristics, and elements where, through consideration of the landscape resource and characteristics, there would generally be a lower landscape capacity or scope for landscape change and higher landscape value and quality. Often includes landscapes which are nationally or internationally designated.
Medium	Landscape character, characteristics, and elements where, through consideration of the landscape resource and characteristics, there would be a medium landscape capacity or some scope for landscape change. Often includes landscapes of medium landscape value and quality which may be locally designated.
Low	Landscape character, characteristics and elements where, through consideration of the landscape resource and characteristics, there would be higher landscape capacity or scope for landscape change to accommodate the proposed type of development as part of spatial strategy for example. Usually applies to landscapes with a lower landscape susceptibility or higher landscape capacity for the proposed development. May also apply to degraded landscapes that may have been subject to very intensive agriculture, blanket forestry, unmitigated / partly naturalised mining operations or similar.
Negligible	Landscape character, characteristics and elements where there is a high-landscape capacity or a planned desire for landscape change of the type proposed as part of spatial strategy for example. Usually applies to landscapes with a lower landscape susceptibility or higher landscape capacity for the proposed development. May also apply to derelict landscapes, spoil heaps, and de-graded urban fringe areas that require restoration or re-development / re-planting.

3.4.3. Magnitude of Change

Magnitude of change has been predicted by considering the anticipated loss or disruption to character forming landscape components, which would arise through the introduction of the scheme. Four levels of magnitude of visual impact have been adopted:

Magnitude of Change	
High	Very obvious change in the balance of landscape characteristics over an Extensive area; ranging to particularly intensive change (i.e. a dominating effect) over a more limited area.
Medium	Perceptible changes in an extensive area which whilst notable do not alter the balance of the landscape characteristics; ranging to moderate changes in the localised area which whilst obvious do not fundamentally change local character;
Low	Virtually imperceptible change in any components of the wider landscape with modest and unremarkable changes in the localised area.
Negligible	No material change from the current situation.

Examples of Magnitude of visual impact	
High	A total or prominent change that may be large in scale and / or extent and include the loss of key landscape characteristics or the addition of new uncharacteristic features or elements, that would become the dominant characteristics of the landscape, and change the overall landscape quality, and character over a large area.
Medium	Moderate changes in the nature of the view. A noticeable change of more limited scale and extent including the loss of some key landscape characteristics or elements, or the addition of some new uncharacteristic features or elements that would potentially change landscape quality and indicate the potential for change in landscape character of a localised area or part of a landscape character area.
Low	A change affecting small areas of landscape character and quality, including the loss of lower value landscape elements or the addition of new features or elements of limited characterising influence.
Negligible	A change affecting smaller areas of landscape character and quality, including the loss of some landscape elements or the addition of features or elements, which are either of low value or hardly noticeable.
None	There would be no change to the receptor.

3.4.4. Impact Analysis and Significance

The prime criteria used to evaluate impact on landscape character are centred on the extent to which existing landscape elements, features and characteristics would be lost or modified, taking into account landscape mitigation measures. The significance of predicted impacts on local character has been assessed by considering the sensitivity to change and magnitude of change. Account has been taken of the effect landscape proposals and mitigation measures would have in offsetting or effectively minimising potentially adverse impacts.

The findings are represented using a descriptive scale:

- 1. Substantial Adverse Effect** - The proposed development would be at considerable variance with the landform, scale and pattern of the landscape. It would be visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views of the area. The proposed development would be substantially damaging to the landscape and would be in serious conflict with local and national policies to protect open land and nationally recognised countryside.
- 2. Moderate Adverse Effect** - The proposed development would be out of scale with the landscape, or at odds with the local pattern and landform. It would have an adverse impact on a landscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements. They would be in conflict with local and national policies to protect open land and nationally recognised countryside.

3. **Slight Adverse Effect** - The proposed development would not quite fit the landform and scale of the landscape. Although not very visually intrusive, it would impact on certain views into and across the area. It would have a discernible but not marked impact on an area of recognised landscape quality. It would conflict with local authority policies for protecting the local character of the countryside.
4. **Neutral Effect** - The proposals would not materially affect the perception of the existing landscape.

3.5. Visual Impact

The visual impact assessment has involved the consideration of the sensitivity of visual receptors and the magnitude of change, based upon information gathered through a combination of desk-based analysis and field survey work.

3.5.1. Identification of Key Receptors

Key receptors may include the following:

- Settlements, residential areas and individual properties;
- Roads within the assessment area;
- Recreational and public areas including footpaths, bridleways and other public rights of way.

Receptors were initially identified and recorded by reviewing the settlement, land use, vegetation, topography, access and transportation patterns of the assessment area, and validated or discounted by the field survey.

The field survey was undertaken on 18th and 20th October 2021, by Hilary Newhall CMLI, Chartered Landscape Architect, assisted by Junior Landscape Architects, Chris Vale and Sam Saltmarsh-Bailey, to record and evaluate potential visual impacts for key receptors. The field survey also included checking areas where potential viewpoints were found to have no intervisibility with the proposed development site. These points have also been recorded on the Viewpoints plan (see Appendix 5)

3.5.2. Sensitivity of the Receptor

It is important to remember that visual receptors are people. For each viewpoint, the assessment considers both susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views. Sensitivity will generally be reduced with distance from the site as the development becomes a small part of the larger environment.

The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:

- Residents at home;
- People engaged in outdoor recreation, including the use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views;

- Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions, where views of surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;
- Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;
- Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be higher.

Visual receptors that are less likely to be sensitive to change include:

- People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;
- People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings.

Judgements on the value attached to views experienced, take account of:

- Recognition of the value attached to particular views, for example in relation to heritage assets, or through planning designations;
- Indicators of the value attached to views by visitors, for example through appearances in guidebooks or visitor maps.

Judgements on visual value in this assessment are noted in terms of; High, Medium, Low and Negligible.

In the assessment, visual sensitivity is ranked as follows.

High Sensitivity - Individual dwellings or dwelling groupings with a view in which the proposed scheme would become an important focal element from gardens or room windows, either from upper or lower storey. Roads, footpaths, bridleways and publicly accessible open spaces with a view in which the proposed scheme would be an important focal element in that view.

1. **Medium Sensitivity** - Individual dwellings or dwelling groupings with a view from either gardens or room windows, either from upper or lower storey, in which the proposed scheme would not be a focal element but would be a notable element in the view. Roads, footpaths, bridleways and publicly accessible open spaces with a view in which the proposed scheme would not be a focal element but would be a notable element in the view. Industrial or commercial buildings with a view in which the new scheme would be a focal element in the view.
2. **Low Sensitivity** - Dwellings with a view from gardens or room windows, either from upper or lower storey, in which the proposed scheme would not be a notable element in the view but would be discernible. Roads, footpaths, bridleways and publicly accessible open spaces with a view in which the proposed scheme would not be a notable element in the view but would be discernible. Industrial or commercial buildings with a view in which the proposed scheme would not be a focal element but would be a notable element in the view.
3. **Negligible** – Dwellings near to the proposed development, but with no garden or windows facing the proposed scheme. Roads, footpaths, bridleways and publicly accessible open spaces near to the schemes, but with little or no views to the proposed scheme, due to intervening landform, buildings or vegetation, thus views would be identified as an occasional glimpse, at most. Industrial or commercial buildings with little or no views to the proposed scheme.

3.5.3. Magnitude of Change

Magnitude of change considers the extent of the scheme that would be visible, the percentage of the existing view newly occupied by the scheme and the viewing distance from the receptor to the scheme. In the assessment, magnitude of visual change is ranked as follows.

1. **High Magnitude** - Where the development would cause a substantial change to the existing view for the receptors.
2. **Medium Magnitude** - Where the development would cause a noticeable change to the existing view for the receptors.
3. **Low Magnitude** - Where the development would cause a perceptible change to the existing view for the receptors .
4. **No Change** - Where the development would cause no discernible change to the existing view.

3.5.4. Impact Analysis and Significance

The prime criteria used to evaluate visual impact relate to the extent to which existing views for key receptors would change, taking into account landscape mitigation measures. Potential impacts have been considered both during and after construction and during winter and summer periods. Impact has been considered immediately after completion of development (including implementation of the landscape plan), and after 5 years, 10 years and 15 years.

The significance of predicted impacts for each identified visual receptor has been assessed by considering the sensitivity to change and magnitude of change. Account has been taken of the effect landscape proposals and mitigation measures would have in offsetting or effectively minimising potentially adverse impacts.

The findings are represented using a descriptive scale ranging from adverse to neutral effects

1. **Substantial Adverse Effect** - Where the scheme would cause a significant deterioration in the existing view for the receptors with the highest sensitivity.
2. **Moderate Adverse Effect** - Where the scheme would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view, or the receptors are not considered to be of the highest sensitivity.
3. **Slight Adverse Effect** - Where the scheme would cause a perceptible deterioration in the existing view, either due to the proposed scheme is a small part of the overall landscape or because the sensitivity of receptors is low.
4. **Neutral** - Where there would be no discernible deterioration or improvement in the existing view.

The various levels of impact can be applied to individual properties, groups of houses, areas of open space and lengths of footpath. Each identified receptor has been evaluated against the visual assessment criteria and has been allocated an impact rating. The assessment concludes with a brief discussion of the overall visual implications of the proposal and a summary rating for visual impact.

3.6. Engaging with stakeholders and the public

The Aarhus Convention, 2005 requires that the methods, processes and outcomes of engagement with interested parties, statutory and non-statutory consultees and members of the public are described.

As this project is still in its early stages, consultation has taken place with the adjacent 4 houses, but wider consultation has not yet taken place.

4. Baseline studies

4.1. Landscape Character Area

The description and classification of the existing landscape character has involved a review of available landscape character assessment information from various sources including National Character Area Profiles: 54. Manchester Pennine Fringe and the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Report.

Local landscape character has been defined by taking account of geology and soils, hydrology, land cover and land use, the planning and policy context, statutory and non-statutory designations, archaeology, ecology, buildings and settlements, historic and cultural references, climate data, public rights of way, vegetation and wildlife and topography and altitude.

The proposed development site itself falls within The Manchester Pennine Fringe Character Area, which includes Bolton, Bury, Rochdale Middleton, Oldham, Dukinfield, Glossop and Hazel Grove. The full extent of this is shown in the figure to the right (screenshot from the NCA pdf brochure)

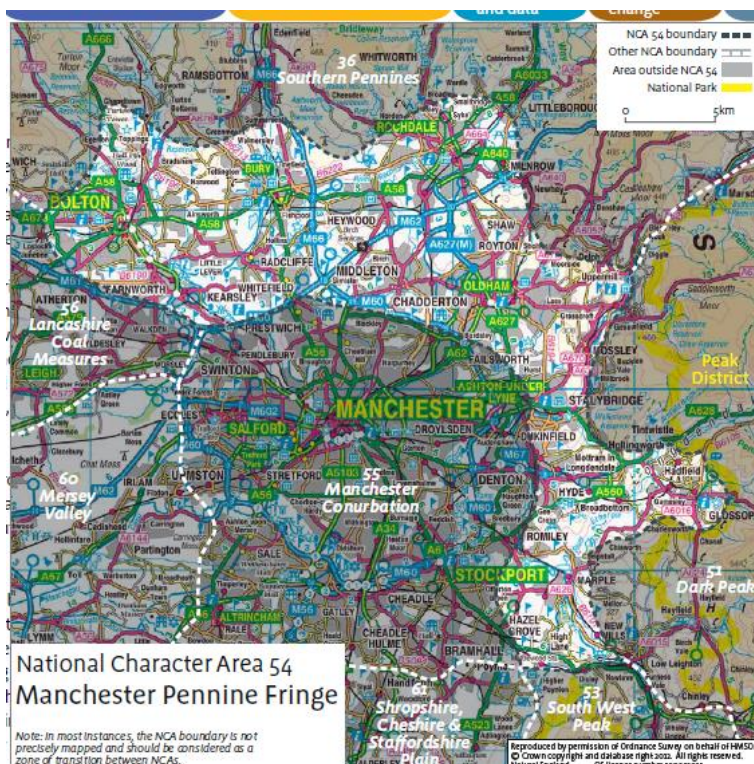


Figure 2: Manchester Pennine Fringe Character Area

The land in this area, is like the majority of the Area Character, “The natural distribution of habitats throughout the area has been heavily modified by human activity over centuries, especially since the Industrial Revolution. Woodland is concentrated in narrow, steep-sided valleys that cut into smooth shoulders of pastoral land, but it also extends along whole river valleys.”

The NCA 54 describes The Manchester Pennine Fringe area as being “a transitional zone between the open moorlands of the Dark Peak and Southern Pennines, and the densely populated urban conurbation of Manchester.”

“The area owes much of its character to its proximity to the adjacent Pennine moors, and the deeply incised, steep valleys that characterise the transition from moorland to urban area. The elevation of the area is generally between 100 m and 300 m, between the lower plains and higher Pennine moors”.

“Much of the countryside is influenced by recreational use from adjacent urban areas and also by the diversification of farmland. The river valleys, upland hinterland and proximity of urban development all contribute to the area’s distinct Pennine fringe character.”

“The closeness of the adjacent Manchester Conurbation NCA is reflected in the fact that many of the settlements act as ‘satellite towns’. The modern tram and busy public transport networks link the Manchester Pennine Fringe NCA with Manchester city centre”.

“ The history of the landscape is evident through the legacy of industrial archaeology, particularly Woodland High population densities across a belt of industrial towns, with busy transport networks and motorways. Almost half of this NCA is classed as urban. d cover is characterised by a range of woodland types concentrated along river valleys...” “High population densities across a belt of industrial towns, with busy transport networks and motorways. Almost half of this NCA is classed as urban”.

The site itself falls outside the categories defined in the Greater Manchester Character and Sensitivity Report. The nearest category lies 2.5km to the north west of the proposed development site and is defined as 27. Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green Landscape Character Area.

4.2. Visual Character

The proposed development site is an area of on unused vacant land, rising gently from the shoulders of the steep Wince Brook Valley.

Bounding the site to the west and northwest, at right angles to the proposed dwellings, are four detached houses. To north, northeast, and east, the ground falls away sharply into the valley of Wince Brook. To the south, southwest, the ground rises steeply towards a patch of woodland at the back of houses on Round Thorn Road. The following photographs are from within the site looking outward to identify any receptors where there may be intervisibility with the proposed development site.



Figure 2 Panorama to northwest - west showing existing housing



Figure 3 View to west across Wince Brook Valley



Figure 4 View to south, southwest to trees behind Round Thorn Road

4.3. Geology

The underlying geology of this area is Carboniferous Millstone Grit Group and the Pennine Coal Measures Group which broadly dip to the south-west.

“Extensive glacial deposits cover much of the lower ground. Glacial till, sands and gravels left by the last Devensian glaciation dominate. Fluvioglacial gravels sands and silts are also extensive resulting from meltwater flow over the area and post glacial rejuvenation of the river systems”.

4.4. Buildings and Settlements

The proposed development site is on the northern boundary of Alkrington Garden Village where building began in 1909. The housing in this area generally has good sized gardens and plenty of green spaces. There are also several schools and local shops. In the nearby valleys, there are numerous business parks of varying sizes, taking advantage of close rail and road links. In Wince Brook Valley, immediately to the north of the proposed development site are a mixture of houses, flats and industrial units.

The proposed development is for two additional houses, at right angles to four houses which have recently been built by the same development company. The houses stand physically and visually apart from surrounding housing, offering the opportunity to create their own, high quality, aesthetic. These two houses will create a natural culmination to the developed area, separating the scheme of six houses from the Wince Brook valley, whilst “borrowing landscape” from further afield, including planting of native trees and shrubs to the rear of the two proposed houses of this scheme.

4.5. Historical and Cultural Associations

Within a 2km radius of the proposed site there are thirty-five Listed Buildings, as is expected in an urban area. Many of these listings are in clusters, such as, a church, font, lychgate etc. There is one conservation area in the centre of Middleton, the edge of which is 860m from the proposed development site.

It is thought that there was a settlement of Middleton from the 7th Century. Developing as an important Market Town in later years, Middleton was a centre of flannel and woollen cloth production, silk production and cotton spinning.

The key buildings within the study area are St Leonard’s Church (Grade I), Tonge Hall (Grade II*) and Alkrington Hall (Grade II*).

The Land Utilisation Survey of Britain (1925 – 1948) suggests that the area was undeveloped, except for a small marking (red circle) which appears to be the same colour as that used for housing (pink, as seen in the crescent-shaped development (red oval) of Mainway E and Brookside Crescent). This could have been the beginnings of Ramsden Farm, which occupied the area prior to its demolition.

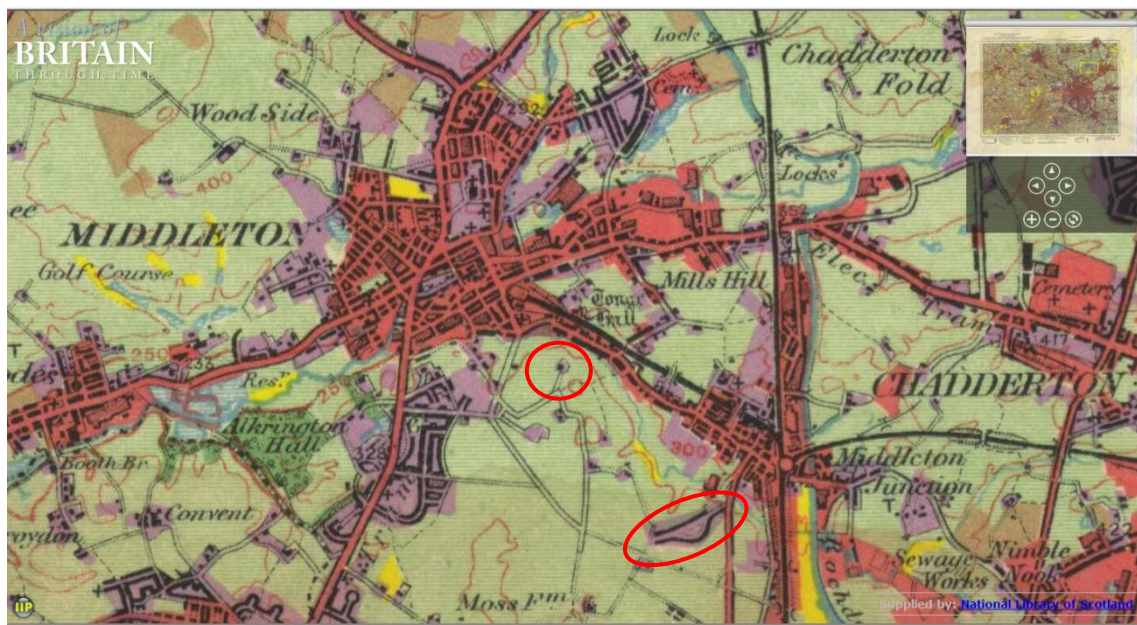


Figure 3: Unpublished Land Utilisation Survey of Britain 1925 - 1948 1:63360

4.6. Ecology

The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, produced in May 2021 by Rachel Hackling Ecology, divided the site into five categories: Bare Ground, Continuous Scrub, Ephemeral/ Short Perennial, Improved grassland and Intact Hedgerow, with some scattered trees and scrub.

At 4.2, the report states that the site offers limited ecological value and all habitats on the site or {sic} species poor, with the scrub, hedgerow and scattered trees being the most ecologically valuable habitats.

At 4.3 the report states that the majority of the habitats on the site will be lost through development although the most ecologically valuable (continuous scrub, hedgerow and scattered trees) will remain.

There are no habitats for protected species which will be affected by the development, however, a nesting bird survey will be required should work need to be carried out to the suitable vegetation within the bird nesting season (generally March to August).

There are a number of opportunities for habitat enhancement suggested in the report and these have been included in the landscape plan with new native tree and shrub planting, perennial and annual wildflower areas and bird and bat boxes.

Friends of Wince Brook, a local organisation which has created a Community Nature Reserve along Wince Brook, are carrying out activities in the area, with a view to improving the ecological value of the valley.

4.7. Public rights of way

There are numerous footpaths within the proposed development site and beyond, including two crossings of Wince Brook, in the valley adjacent to the proposed development site. Footpath improvements are included in the planned improvements associated with the proposed development.

There is a Bridleway running southwest, northeast, which is approximately 460m from the proposed development site. Two recreational routes run to the east and west of the proposed development site. 1230m to the east, is the Oldham Way, running north to south. 870m to the west, is the Rochdale Way, which runs from southwest to northeast.

There also are many other public footpaths and desire lines within the 2km study area, making a useful network of connections for car-free journeys.

5. Visual Receptors

5.1. Bare earth model Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

The ZTV shows significant intervisibility for 360° around the proposed development site, however, the ZTV is based on a “bare earth model” and does not account for intervening vegetation and buildings. Field verification found that there is, in fact, very little intervisibility outside the immediate area of the proposed development site (approximately 300m across Wince Brook valley)

5.2. Public Highways

The closest receptors on public highways would be on Grimshaw Lane (B6189) Dane Bank, Albany Street running from northwest to southeast, Kirkway and St Dominics Way to the west and Round Thorn Road to the east. Along all these roads, any views would be glimpses due to the vegetation and existing buildings. Therefore, these receptors would be of **Low Sensitivity** due to the brief duration of any views and the fact that most people using these roads are going about unrelated business.

5.3. Residential Properties

Views from publicly accessible positions (in accordance with the GLVIA) between houses on St Dominics Way, Round Thorn Road, Kirkway, Dane Bank and Albany Street mostly have vegetation or buildings between them and the proposed development site, making clear views to the proposed development site unlikely. There may be clearer views from rear windows of properties, but the GLVIA suggests that if required, these should form part of a separate study agreed with the local authority. These receptors are deemed to be of **Low to Medium Sensitivity** due to either the distance from the site; intervening buildings or vegetation or the oblique angles from which the proposed development would be seen.

5.4. Public Rights of Way

Views from the closest footpaths to the proposed development will be significantly altered, with views to back gardens and the rear of houses clearly visible. However, users of the public footpath, particularly around the western edge of the site are likely to consist mainly of local residents (some of which will be involved in dog walking, others for health reasons and others to enjoy a walk in natural surroundings. As a result, the degree to which enjoyment of the scenery is an important part of their recreational experience will vary. Consequently, the receptors on adjacent footpaths are deemed to be of **Low to Medium Sensitivity** depending on the reasons for using the footpaths. Where enjoyment of the scenery is important, the receptors are considered to be of **Medium Sensitivity** as Wince Brook Valley is only recognised as having local designations.

Other footpaths and bridleways are also likely to be used by local residents. Due to the inherent lower quality of the landscape, the distance from the proposed development, intervening vegetation and buildings and oblique angles from these footpaths, the receptors on them are considered to be of **Low Sensitivity**.

People walking along the Oldham and Rochdale ways, may include a larger number of tourists who are particularly interested in enjoying the scenery. However, these two paths are significantly further away from the proposed development site than the local footpaths and bridleways and are therefore considered to be of **Low Sensitivity**.

5.5. ZTV and Assessment Area Plan

As outlined in section 4.2, a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTVs) was produced for this development (based on a ridge height of 9 metres). This is shown in Appendix 2: Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV). The ZTV shows significant intervisibility between the proposed development site and the surrounding areas. However, ZTVs are based on a “bare earth” model and do not take into account any buildings, trees and hedgerows present.

During two field verification visits, a chartered landscape architect and two junior landscape architects studied the area to determine the actual visibility from key areas chosen from the desk study, and also checked other areas during the visit itself. The actual visibility of the site is severely limited by the surrounding buildings and vegetation, leaving only viewpoints from nearby footpaths and within the development site itself, from residential properties that are already occupied as key viewpoints. Viewpoints have been chosen to represent the above receptors and range from **0 – 146** metres in distance from the proposed development site. These are shown in Appendix 5: Viewpoints Map. For clarity, points which were assessed and found to have no intervisibility are also noted on this plan.

5.6. Photography

The photographs were taken on 18th October 2021 in heavy to medium rainfall clearing slightly in the late afternoon.

The camera was a Panasonic Lumia DMC T270 digital camera on an auto setting, with the focus set to infinity (∞) and the aspect ratio set to 4:3. Images were saved as JPEGs. The height of the camera was approximately 1.5m which is generally accepted as an average eye height.

6. Viewpoints

6.1. Viewpoint 1

VP1 - Grid Ref: SD 876053	
Location:	Between 3 and 4 Ramsden Farm, off Round Thorn Road, Middleton, facing east southeast.
Distance to boundary of proposed development site	Approximately 10 m
Receptor:	Residents of houses diagonally opposite the proposed development site. Vehicles and pedestrians travelling to and from the houses at Ramsden Farm. This viewpoint has been chosen to be representative of receptors in houses close to the proposed development site, along Ramsden Park (road).
Sensitivity:	Medium for residents, Low for vehicles and pedestrians.
Visual impact/magnitude change:	Residents of the four adjacent houses were told that an application for two more houses would be made so the proposed development, for existing residents, should not come as an unexpected element in the local area. Depending on the exact position of the viewer, the proposed development could appear to be of significant size within the overall view. In these cases, the visual impact is considered to be Medium and the magnitude of change is considered to be Medium, due to the limited space which the proposed development will occupy. People travelling along the road either by vehicle or on foot are considered to be doing so with a purpose which is not related to the surrounding scenery and therefore the visual impact for them is considered to be Low. The magnitude of change for these people is considered to be Low.
Immediate significance:	Slight Adverse Effect , rather than Moderate, due to the receptors being notified that there was an intention to add two more houses. The proposed development would alter the landform of the site, in order to accommodate the two houses, however, the proposed development also includes plans to plant perennial and annual meadow species in the species-poor bank, and native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the proposed houses, bulking up existing vegetation thereby increasing the biodiversity of this part of the Wince Brook Valley and softening the proposed buildings.

Medium term significance (5 years):	Slight Adverse to Neutral Effect as the planting becomes more established and begins to look more cohesive within the wider environment.
Long term significance (10+ years)	Neutral Effect as the proposed development and associated landscape become an accepted part of the local area and indistinguishable from the pre-existing landscape.
Assessment:	The overall quality of the landscape (using the criteria outlined in section 4.41) can be classified as Ordinary to Poor. The receptor sensitivity of people living in the vicinity of this viewpoint is considered to be Medium, due to people living diagonally opposite to the proposed development having been told that a proposal was planned for another two houses. Residents living near the proposed development site are likely to experience increased levels of noise and dust during the completion phase, although these could vary considerably in level, duration and distance from the site The long-term visual effect of the proposed development scheme is considered to be Neutral Effect from this viewpoint due to the proposed mitigation features.



Figure 4: **Viewpoint 1** looking east southeast across Ramsden Farm (road), towards the proposed development site.

6.2. Viewpoint 2

VP2 - Grid Ref: SD877055	
Location:	Car park on south-eastern side of Wince Brook court.
Distance to boundary of proposed development site	Approximately 140m
Receptor:	Residents of Wince Brook Court and people travelling in vehicles along Grimshaw Lane.
Sensitivity:	Residents Low and drivers Low
Visual impact/magnitude change:	The visual impact of the proposed development from this viewpoint is considered to be Slight Adverse Effect given the distance from the proposed development site, the percentage of view which would change and the vegetation between this viewpoint and the proposed development site. The magnitude of change is considered to be Low which is also due to the distance from the proposed development site, the percentage of view which would change and the vegetation between this viewpoint and the proposed development site
Immediate significance:	Residents: Slight Adverse Effect - The proposed development would not quite fit the landform and scale of the landscape. Although not very visually intrusive, it would impact on certain views into and across the area. It would have a discernible but not marked impact for the most part due to the distance between the receptors and the proposed development and the new and established intervening vegetation. Drivers: Neutral Effect – for receptors in cars travelling along Grimshaw Lane. The proposals would not materially affect the perception of the existing landscape due to glimpsed views of a small area at a significant distance away.
Medium term significance (5 years):	Neutral Effect – due to existing intervening vegetation growing in height and breadth and reducing views and as the proposed native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the properties becomes more established.
Long term significance (10+ years)	Neutral Effect as the intervening existing vegetation grows and becomes indistinguishable from the proposed native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the proposed development.

Assessment:	The overall quality of the landscape (using the criteria outlined in section 4.41) can be classified as Ordinary to Poor. The receptor sensitivity of local residents in the vicinity of this viewpoint and those travelling along Grimshaw Lane is considered to be Low, due to the distance and intervening vegetation between the viewpoint and the proposed development site. The proposed development site takes up a relatively small percentage of the overall view from this viewpoint. It is considered that the short and long-term visual effect of the proposed development scheme is considered to be Slight Adverse to Neutral Effect due to a combination of intervening vegetation, proposed native tree and shrub planting . It is considered unlikely that this area will be subject to noise and dust problems due to the distance from the site.
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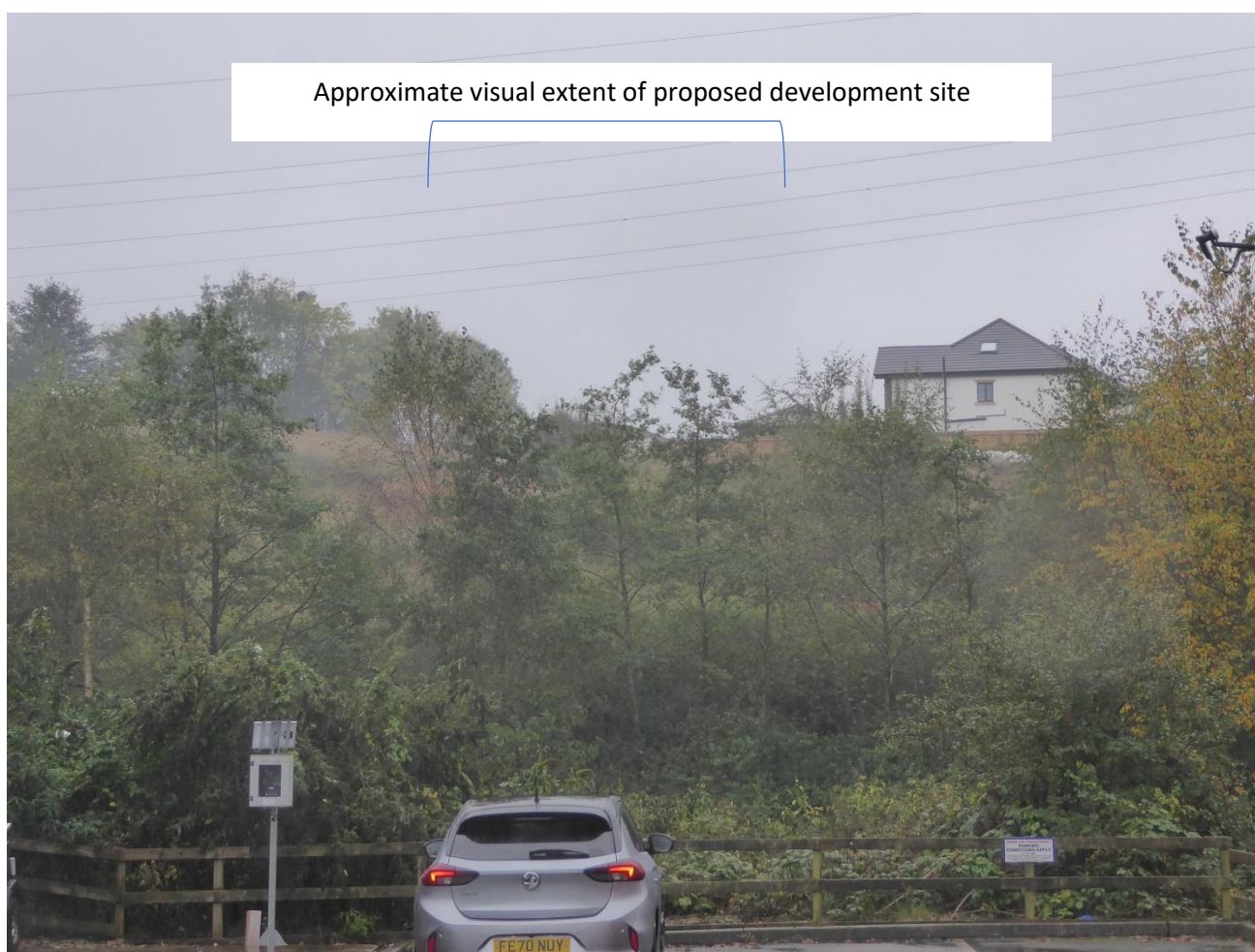


Figure 5: **Viewpoint 2** showing view from car park adjacent to Wince Brook Court looking southwest towards proposed development site.

6.3. Viewpoint 3

VP3 - Grid Ref: SD878053	
Location:	Footpath from Albany Street, towards proposed development site.
Distance to boundary of proposed development site	Approximately 146m from proposed development.
Receptors:	Local people, dog walkers, people working with/ using local nature reserve managed by Friends of Wince Brook.
Sensitivity:	Local people, dog walkers – Low ; Friends of Wince Brook - Medium
Visual impact/magnitude change	The visual impact of the proposed development from this viewpoint is considered to be Moderate to Slight Adverse Effect given the importance of the area to groups such as the “Friends of Wince Brook”, the distance from the proposed development site, the percentage of view which would change, the existing vegetation between this viewpoint and the proposed development site and the proposed native tree and shrub planting at the rear of the proposed houses. The magnitude of change is considered to be Low due to the distance from the proposed development site, the percentage of view which would change, the existing vegetation between this viewpoint and the proposed development site, the proposed native tree and shrub planting at the rear of the proposed houses, all of which would mean that only glimpses are seen.
Immediate significance:	Moderate to Slight Adverse Effect – For the Friends of Wince Brook, it is considered that the proposed development would feel that the proposed development would have an adverse impact on the local landscape which they value, despite the existing intervening vegetation and proposed planting of native species trees and shrubs to the rear of the proposed houses. For local people, including dog walkers it is considered that there would be a Slight Adverse Effect as the proposals would not be seen as visually intrusive but would be noticeable from certain viewpoints.
Medium term significance: (5 Years)	Slight Adverse Effect – for the Friends of Wince Brook who are likely to continue to notice the change in the landscape, despite the majority of the development being hidden by existing vegetation, including the native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the proposed houses.

	Neutral Effect – local people, including dog walkers are unlikely to notice the minor change in the landscape, especially with the growth of existing planting and the proposed native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the houses.
Long term significance: (10+ years)	Neutral Effect – local people, including the Friends of Wince Brook and dog walkers are unlikely to be able to see the minor change in the landscape from this proposed development, especially with the growth of existing planting and the proposed native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the houses.
Assessment:	The overall quality of the landscape (using the criteria outlined in section 4.41) can be classified as Ordinary to Poor. The receptor sensitivity of local residents and dog walkers in the vicinity of this viewpoint is considered to be Low, due to the distance between the viewpoint and the proposed development site. The receptor sensitivity of the people aware of or belonging to the Friends of Wince Brook is considered to be Medium as they are most likely in the area to enjoy the scenery of and around Wince Brook Valley. The proposed development site takes up a relatively small percentage of the overall view from this viewpoint and will be mostly glimpses through the trees. It is considered that over time, the visual effect of the proposed development scheme is considered to be of Neutral Effect as the changes associated with the proposed development, will be softened and somewhat hidden by the existing vegetation, and further hidden and softened by the proposed native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the proposed houses.



Figure 6: **Viewpoint 3** showing view from footpath towards Round Thorn Road looking west towards the proposed development site

7. Summary

(see Landscaping Plan Aug 21 and Design Layout Aug 21)

7.1. Landscape Impact

The landscape of this site is classified (using the criteria outlined in section 3.4.1) as of Ordinary to Poor quality, with that of the wider landscape being deemed as Good to Ordinary quality (see section 4.1). First appearances are those of a degraded landscape with ruderal plants on the disturbed soil, improved grassland on the bank and established trees and shrubs at the top of the bank between the proposed development site and houses on Round Thorn Road.

The sensitivity of this landscape to change is deemed as **Medium to Low** as the proposed changes will lead to a more orderly landscape overall, with higher ecological value due to the addition of perennial and annual planting on the bank and native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the back gardens of the proposed two new houses.

Changes to the proposed housing plots themselves, suggest that the magnitude of change, to be **medium** for residents in Nos. 1 to 4 Ramsden Farm. For the remainder of the site, based on the information provided by the layout plans and site visits, the magnitude of change will be **Low** and will make positive contributions to the ecological value of the area, including the proposals for the edge of Wince Brook Valley. Consequently, the overall, long term landscape effect associated with the proposed development is considered **Slight Beneficial Effect**, given the current “run down” nature of the proposed development site.

7.2. Visual Impact

7.2.1. Construction Phase

Residents living near the proposed development site are likely to experience increased levels of noise and traffic during the construction phase, although these could vary considerably in level and duration.

A **Substantial to Moderate Adverse Effect** is likely to be experienced during some of the working periods of the construction phase for receptors from Viewpoint 1 due to the distance from the proposed development site. Any disturbance will be variable, according to the type of work being carried out on any particular day. Potential **Substantial Adverse Effect** can be reduced to **Moderate Adverse Effect** by informing immediate neighbours of expected works, and limiting working and taking deliveries between specific hours.

7.2.2. Long Term / Residual Effects

The most marked effects will be for the immediate neighbours, who have been aware of the plans to apply for planning permission for two more houses, since before they purchased the properties. The additional two houses could be seen as the completion of a small estate and much of the officer's report for the existing four houses is relevant to this proposed development. Long term residual effects will be **Moderate Beneficial** in terms of visual improvements, due to the proposed buildings themselves being of high quality and the fact that these will replace the areas of the site which currently appear to be unkempt. Areas which are neither proposed houses or gardens will be treated sympathetically in terms of visual improvement and also improvements to local ecological value through the planting of perennial and annual wildflower plants and native trees and shrubs.

8. Mitigation and Enhancement

(see Landscaping Plan Aug 21 and Design Layout Aug 21)

The aims of the mitigation and enhancement proposals are to provide measures to reduce the potential adverse effects of the proposed development on the landscape and on visual amenity, and to maximize the opportunity for landscape enhancement as well as to contribute to landscape character and ecological value.

Mitigation and enhancement measures for this development are comprised of the following principal elements:

- Retain and enhance all existing landscape features particularly the mature trees and hedgerows forming the site boundaries
- Native tree and shrub planting to the rear of the proposed houses
- Perennial and annual wildflower planting on the bank
- Bird and bat boxes

The mitigation and enhancement methods proposed will reduce the visual impact of the development and allow it to blend into the immediate area without jeopardising the character of the wider landscape. The findings below show how the mitigation measures will reduce the impact of the proposed development.

Based on the findings of this LVIA, site specific mitigation and enhancement measures are considered on the following pages.

All the existing trees and hedgerows will be retained as part of the development proposals. Additional native trees and shrubs will be planted to help screen the site. During the construction process all the existing trees and hedges will be protected. Additional planting of native trees, shrubs and perennial and annual wildflower species will enhance the existing vegetation and improve the habitat for existing species on the site while improving the ecological value of the surrounding area. The planting scheme has taken account of the Landscape Character assessments discussed earlier in this report.

The form and scale of the proposed planting scheme will be similar to that of the existing vegetation and will build on the existing hedgerows and woodland in the surrounding area. The planting will be visible from various locations and will appear as a natural feature. Changes to the landscape elements of the site are designed to make a positive contribution to the local landscape character on the site while simultaneously enhancing the biodiversity in accordance with the local plan.

The mitigation methods were used to reduce the impact of the development and provide specific measures to help prevent problems through the design process. The Landscape and Ecological Enhancement Proposals show the features which have been added to reduce the visual impact of the development and improve the quality of the site design. These include:

- A planting scheme which includes; native tree planting and a native whip planting scheme as suggested by the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey
- Perennial and annual wildflower planting to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates, to be selected from the RHS, RSPB and Woodland Trust lists wherever possible in order to maximise wildlife value
- Habitat enhancement with the installation of bat boxes and bird boxes in suitable locations

These areas will also form links to the wider biodiversity networks beyond the site

Native tree and shrub planting: Mix of Silver Birch, Rowan, Wild Cherry, Crab Apple, Hawthorn, Bird Cherry, Alder, Dog Rose, Holly.

Perennial and annual wildflower planting: Birds foot trefoil, Common sorrel, Cowslip, Field scabious, Hoary plantain, Greater and common knapweed, Lady's bedstraw, Meadow buttercup, Ox eye daisy, Red clover, Ribwort plantain, Yarrow, Yellow Rattle. This planting will also include Wild grasses, such as bents, fescues and crested dogstail .



Figure 7 Landscape & Ecological Enhancement Proposals

9. References

DEFRA's (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) database

Guidelines on Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition), published by the Landscape Institute (LI) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA)

Greater Manchester Record Centre https://www.gmwildlife.org.uk/wildlife_sites/

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Landscape & Ecological Enhancement Proposals, Watergrove CGI, Aug 21

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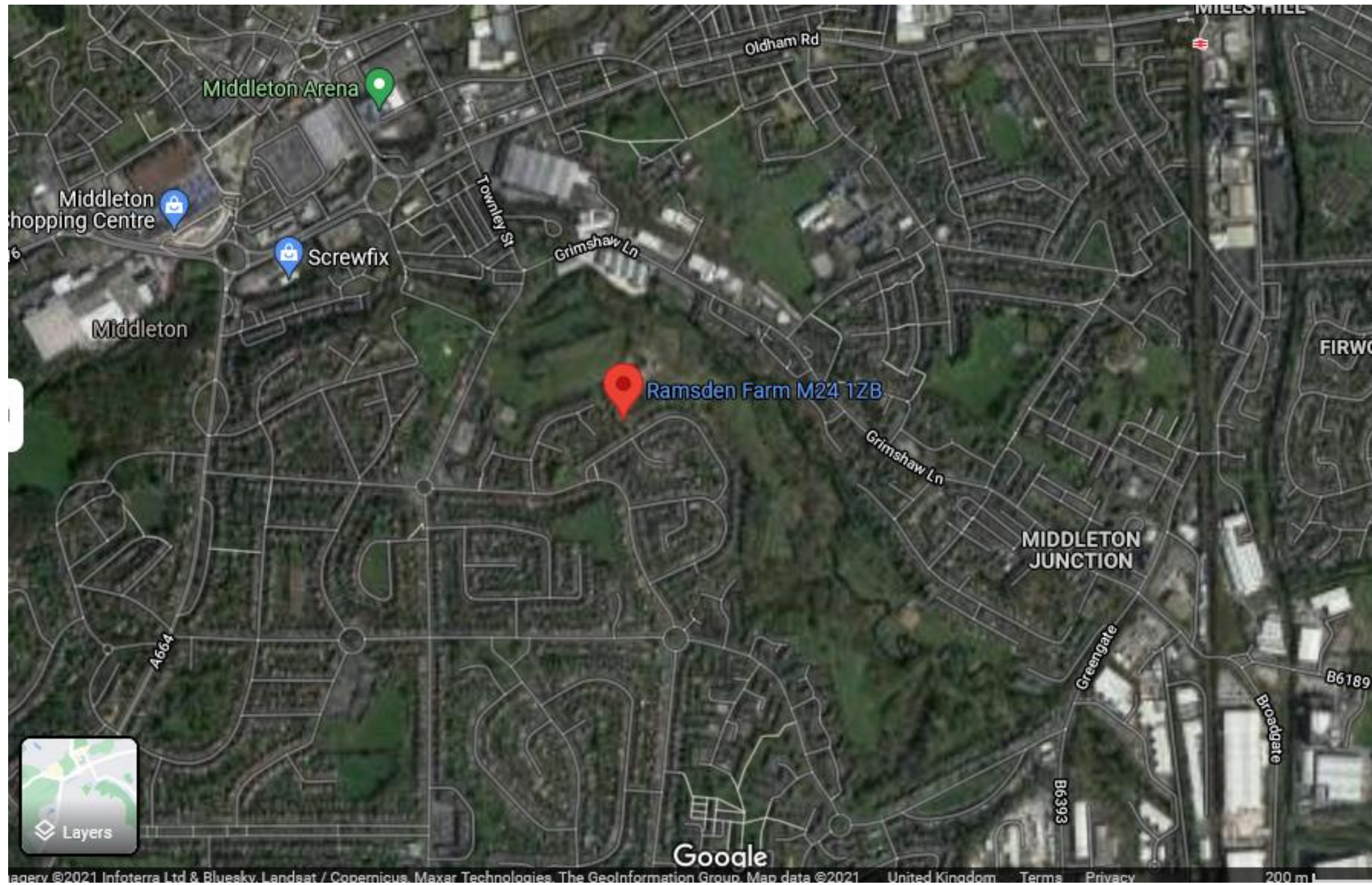
UK Grid Reference Finder <https://www.google.com/search?client=firefox-b-d&q=uk+grid+reference+finder>

Vision of Britain

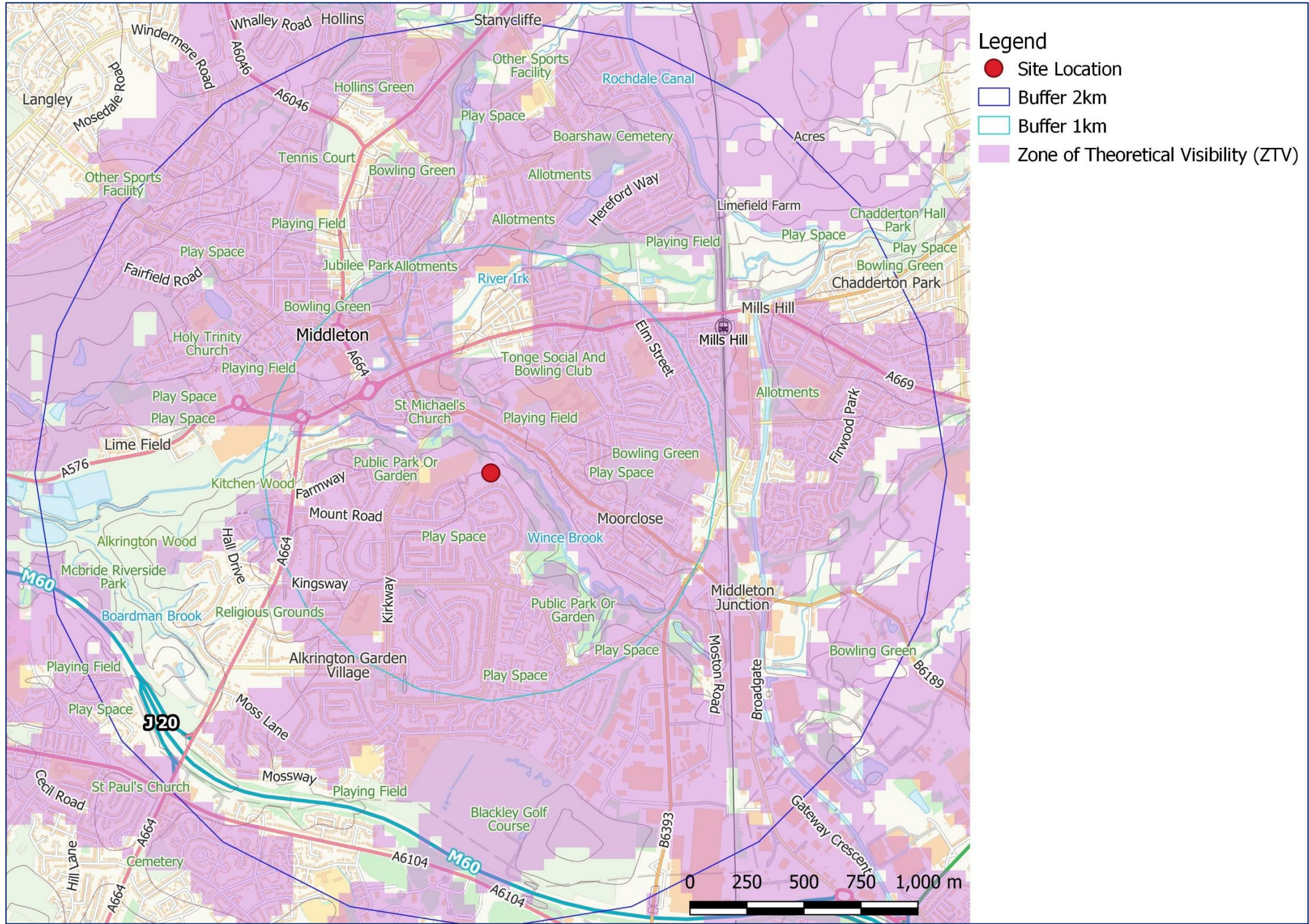
<https://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/maps/?layer=europe&xMin=3199941.01554&yMin=2994340.19257&xMax=3236941.01554&yMax=3031340.19257>

<https://www.solwise.co.uk/wireless-elevationtool.html>

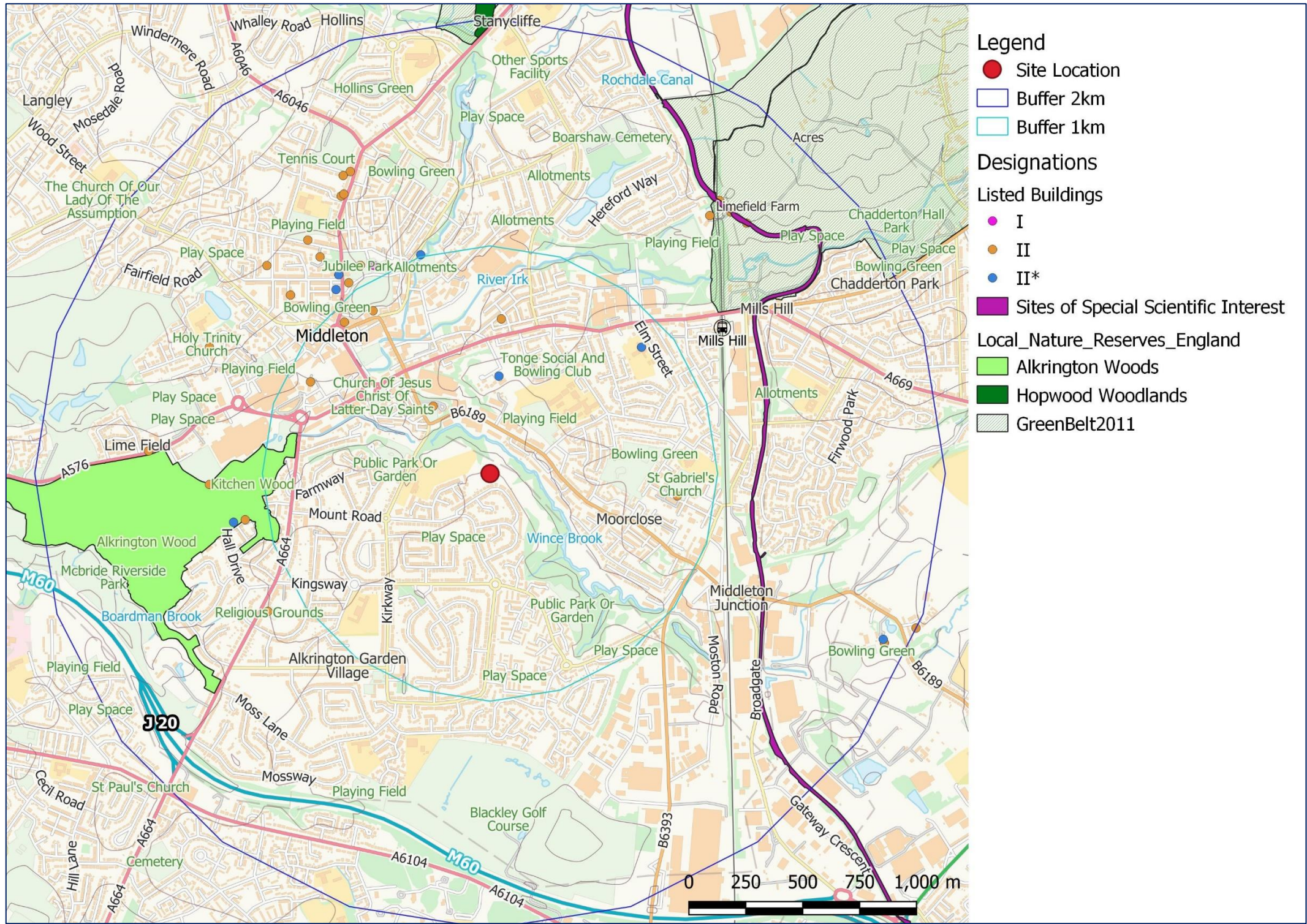
Appendix 1: Location Plan



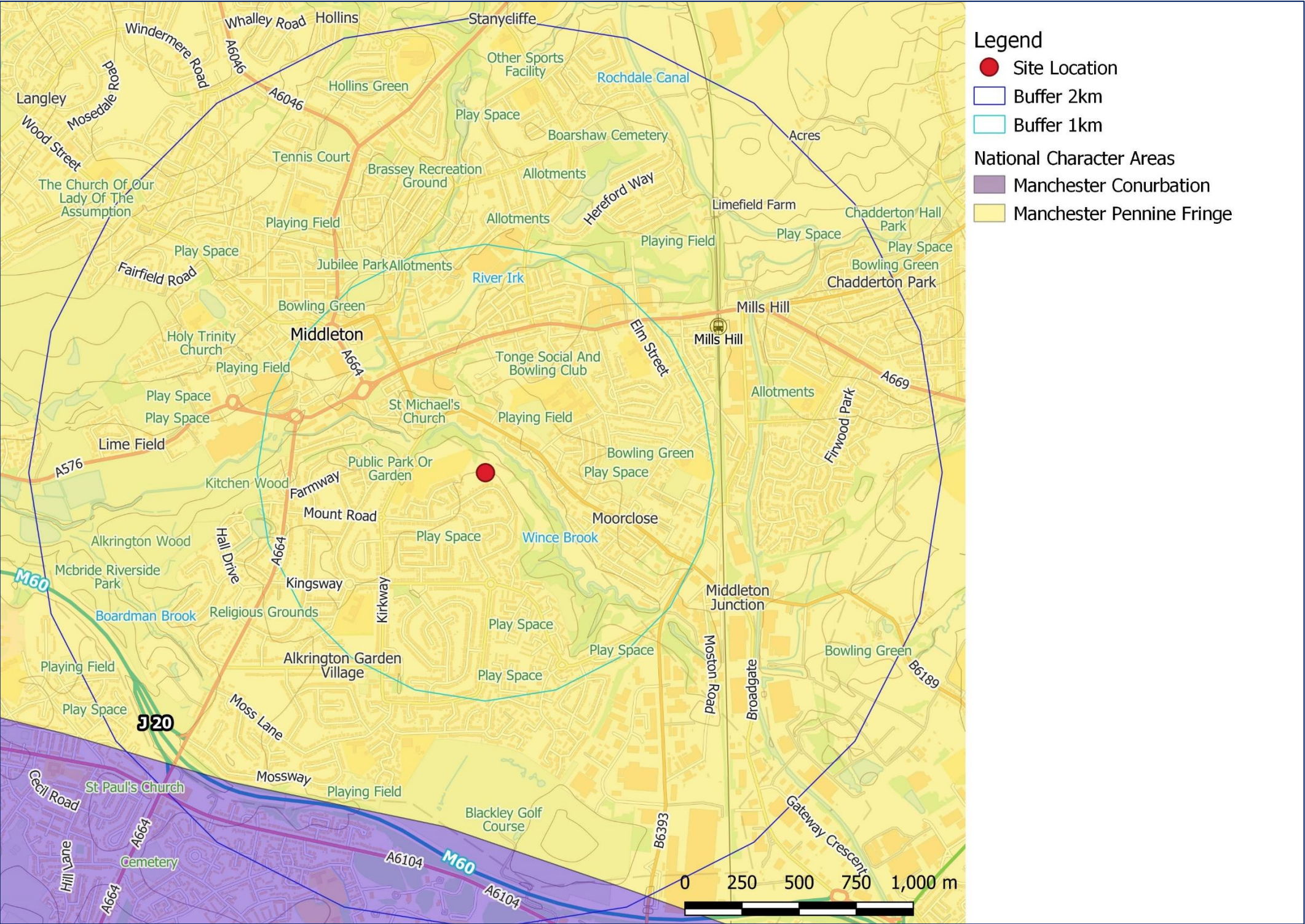
Appendix 2: 2km Study Area and Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)



Appendix 3: Listed Buildings and Local Nature Reserves



Appendix 4: Plan showing study area, with National Character Areas.



Appendix 5: Plan showing study area, with Viewpoints and areas checked for intervisibility.

