



Proposed Development at Hollingworth Road and Rakewood Road, Littleborough

Environmental Statement

Volume 4: Rakewood Road Land Parcel Appendices

On behalf of **Bloor Homes North West**



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Appendix C Landscape and Visual Assessment



Alterations and Extension to the Car Park at Hollingworth Lake Country Park, Rakewood Road, Littleborough

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

On behalf of **Bloor Homes**

Document Control Sheet

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1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Stantec Landscape Planning and Design team were instructed by Bloor Homes in October 2023 to provide an initial Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for a potential car park extension to an existing car park ('the Proposed Development') at Land off Rakewood Road, Littleborough, Rochdale, Greater Manchester ('the site').
- 1.1.2 This document provides a Landscape and Visual Appraisal that considers the potential effects arising from the development of the site and is part of a series of documents which will support the promotion of the site through the Local Plan. This LVA should be read in combination with the figures and photographic material provided. A site visit was undertaken in August 2023 during which a series of panoramic photographs were captured. These are included in the representative site Photographs pack and are not intended to be a comprehensive site or visual appraisal record. At this initial stage they are intended to provide an illustrative overview of the character of the site and its vicinity, as well as the nature of key representative views towards the site from the surrounding area.
- 1.1.3 The LVA considers in brief the site's physical context, relevant character assessments and policies, features and character of the site and views towards it along with landscape and visual opportunities and constraints to development.
- 1.1.4 The LVA has been carried out in line with the principles of good practice in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, 2013).

2 Summary Landscape and Visual Appraisal

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The site is located immediately adjacent to the north-eastern edge of Hollingworth Lake and to the south-east of an area of within which is an existing car park off Rakewood Road. The site lies approximately 470m east of an area known as Smithy Bridge, and 885m to the south of Caldermoor, both suburbs of Littleborough - **See Figure 1: site Context Plan.**

2.2 Topography

- 2.2.1 As shown in **Figure 2 – Topography Plan**, the dominant topographical features in the vicinity of the site are the Pennine foothills that rise from the River Roch valley, which lies at approximately 845m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) within the local area to the north-west. Hollingworth Lake, to the immediate south of the site, is a man-made reservoir with notable earth dams / embankments to the east and north. The site is surrounded by a ring of low hills including Cleggswood Hill to the north and Hollingworth Hill to the east, with the site located within the shallow valley between these two hills, located slightly lower than the adjacent lake, separated from it by earthworks created in the 1800s to retain the water in the reservoir. The Pennine Hills rise up to the east with Whittaker Moor at a height of 270m AOD, 2 km to the east of the site. The settlement of Littleborough is broadly aligned along and to the north of the River Roch, 145m AOD to the west of the site.
- 2.2.2 Numerous valleys and intervening foothills create an undulating landform pattern within the local landscape that rises further to the notable higher ground within the Pennines in the wider landscape.

2.3 Land Use and Settlement

- 2.3.1 The site itself is a roughly linear shaped field of arable land located on a lower lying landform. The topography and hydrology of the sites immediate surroundings have been in part manipulated and dictated by existing development. The construction of Hollingworth Lake and the existing car park associated with Hollingworth Lake Country Park Visitor Centre have resulted in earth bunding bounding the site on two sides. Existing development within the local area is located at Smithy Bridge to the west and Littleborough to the north, development has extended along the A58 to the west, to the point where the ribbon development has resulted in there being no clear gap between the settlements of Littleborough and Rochdale. This is clearly evident in views from the surrounding higher ground where the large logistic buildings, located along the A6193, are visible within the wider landscape and provide a visual link to the wider urban areas and reduce the tranquillity and ruralness of the landscape. Beyond these notable features there are further detractors including high voltage overhead power lines and associated pylons, that run across the higher ground to the east, and the large wind turbines that are located across the higher ground to the north, both contributing notable vertical features within the landscape and on the skyline.
- 2.3.2 The junction of the B6225 / Hollingworth Road / Lake Bank and Rakewood Road is an important nodal point within the immediate setting of the site and provides a direct connection between the site and the urban areas of Smithy Bridge, Littleborough and Hollingworth Lake. The existing car park is associated with Hollingworth Lake Country Park Visitor Centre, providing parking to access the lake, the associated local facilities, and public right of way network that are evidently an attractor within the local area. Alongside this there are a number of facilities located along the edge of the lake to include a small row of shops, pubs, cafes and water activity centre.
- 2.3.3 Land use in the wider context, outside of urban areas, is generally open agricultural fields, which gives way to open heathland on the higher ground within the Pennines to the north and

east. There is sporadic development along the local rural lanes to the south, which includes the notable presence of the M62 transport corridor and the south-eastern settlement edge of Rochdale.

2.4 Vegetation

- 2.4.1 The site itself is formed of a roughly linear arable field. There is little in the way of internal vegetation, which is limited to the occasional isolated shrub, and a linear tree belt fronting the northeastern boundary.
- 2.4.2 In the immediate vicinity of the site, the vegetation pattern comprises of irregular shaped arable fields delineated by a combination of mature field hedgerows, hedgerow trees and drystone walls. Within the locality there are a number of woodland tree blocks, these include an area of woodland within which the existing Rakewood Car park is located, Whittaker Wood to the east, and Clegg's Wood and Ealees Wood to the north. A grove of mature trees occupy the lower ridgeline of Hollingworth Fold to the southwest providing screening from isolated residential properties, whilst a steep grassed embankment interfaces Rakewood Road to the east creating a strong degree of separation between the site and the wider area. Additionally, Cleggswood Hill to the north provides a buffer between the site and Littleborough with a transition to the heathlands of the Pennine Hills to the east and south.

2.5 Designations

- 2.5.1 As demonstrated by **Figure 1: Site Context**, the site and study area are subject to the following designations:
- The site is encompassed within the Merseyside and Greater Manchester Green Belt;
 - The site is situated within a 5km buffer zone of the Peak District National Park Special Area of Conservation;
 - The Hollingworth Lake Country Park envelops the site to the north and west with inclusion of the tree belt on the northernmost boundary;
 - The landscape of the study area includes several areas of Ancient Woodland, the closest of which is Ealees Wood, approximately 800m northwest of the site;
 - There are no heritage assets within the site, however, there are a number of listed buildings within the local landscape including Windy Bank (Grade II*); 3 Bear Hill (Grade II), and Whittaker Hold Farmhouse (Grade II), located approximately 1km northeast, 500m south east, and 500m east from the site respectively; and;
 - Blackstone Roman Road is the Scheduled Monument with greatest proximity to the site, located approximately 3km northeast.

2.6 Transport Infrastructure

- 2.6.1 Rakewood Road lies directly south-west of the site, providing a link to the A58 via the B6225, situated approximately 1km north. A minor road provides a connection to the existing car parking facilities to the north-west of the site, extending to a private property in the east. Within the wider context the section of the M62, between Junctions 21 and 22, is located on an elevated position, most notably the bridge section, approximately 1.32km to the south-east at its closest point. The Rochdale Canal and Calder Valley railway line run in parallel within the local area to the north of Cleggswood Hill, providing services between Halifax and Manchester.

- 2.6.2 There are a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) running through the existing car park, with footpath 451 providing direct access to the existing car parking facilities, whilst footpaths 468, 471 and 473 create a strong PRoW network within the immediate area and connect with further routes within the local and wider area. The network of PRoW provides a good level of access to the surrounding facilities, with a Countryside Rights of Way Access Area encompassing the Peak District National Park to the East.
- 2.6.3 Weighver's Way Long Distance Path starts immediately north of the site at Hollingworth Lake Activity Centre and runs parallel to the northern boundary through the wooded belt, further exemplifying the sites connection to a walkable network.
- 2.6.4 Rochdale Way Long Distance Path runs along the southern boundary of the site along Rakewood Road, before passing through the site after which it heads east through the local field network before joining with the Pennine Way further east.
- 2.6.5 The Pennine Bridleway National Trail is of additional note, situated in a proximity of less than 1km to the site, providing partial views down to the site from the surrounding hills.

2.7 Landscape Character

- 2.7.1 The site's immediate setting and local area been subject to published assessment at national, county and settlement level. Given the scale of the site and the extent of the national character areas these have not been considered within this Landscape and Visual Appraisal as there would be no effect arising from the proposals on the landscape character of visual amenity at that scale. As such this LVA focuses on the assessments at county and settlement level.

2.8 Borough Landscape Character – Greater Manchester Landscape Character Assessment

- 2.8.1 Greater Manchester Combined Authority published the Greater Manchester Character and Sensitivity Assessment in August 2018 which aims to bridge the National Character Area profiles, North West Regional Character Framework and prior character assessments undertaken by individual districts. The assessment identifies ten Landscape Character Types (LCTs) within the County, which may be further categorised into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs).
- 2.8.2 The site is immediately set within LCA 29 - Rough Hill to Brun Moor with the wider landscape to the west characterised within LCA 28 - Rochdale and Oldham Pennine Foothills.

LCA 29 – Rough Hill to Brun Moor

- 2.8.3 The following excerpts are of relevance to the site and proposed development with regards to the key characteristics of the LCA include:

Landscape Characteristics

Topography, geology and drainage

- *An elevated, upland landscape rising up to the higher Pennine moorlands/plateaux in the north and east of Greater Manchester. The landform was formed by glacial action and is widely varied and locally distinct, with broad sweeping uplands, areas with dramatic folds, terraces and slopes and occasional stream valleys.*
- *Generally, soil fertility is poor; the majority of agricultural land is classed as Grade 4 or 5.*

- *Small streams and brooks drain the uplands into numerous reservoirs. Some also drain into major rivers including the River Tame and River Irwell.*

Land use and field patterns

- *Upland fringes comprise semi-improved grassland pasture enclosed by a network of gritstone walls (with some replacement by post and wire fencing). Enclosures form a patchwork of small irregular and larger rectangular fields, including Parliamentary enclosures.*
- *Land use in the upland fringes is primarily sheep and cattle farming, with some remnants of unimproved upland pastures. Localised areas are used for horse and pony paddocks.*
- *Reservoirs also form valued recreational destinations with visitor facilities, including Watergrove Reservoir and Ogden Reservoir. Smithills Country Park covers a large area around Smithills Moor.*

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- *Within the enclosed upland fringes, disused quarries, reservoirs, broadleaved valley woodlands, species rich grassland and wetlands are often locally designated as sites of Biological Importance (SBIs).*
- *On the whole, woodland is sparse on the unenclosed uplands. Coniferous/mixed plantations are associated with reservoirs and quarries. Tracts of broadleaved woodland clothe the sides of valleys.*
- *Trees also feature along field boundaries within the enclosed upland fringe.*

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- *Evidence of the industrial heritage of the area, with numerous disused quarries and mines. Near to settlements, mills and chimneys form frequent landmarks.*
- *Inspirational landscape, with well-known cultural associations. The open moorland provided inspiration for Ted Hughes (from neighbouring Calderdale) and poet Ammon Wrigley. Monuments including Peel Tower (Grade II listed) are located in elevated locations.*

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- *Remote with a lack of development within the open moors. The upland fringes have a sparsely settled character, with traditional millstone grit stone-built farms, dispersed cottages and houses and several historic villages with a unifying stone vernacular.*
- *Forms an attractive, undeveloped remote backdrop to and has a strong visual relationship with nearby urban areas.*
- *The unenclosed moorlands include large areas of Open Access Land. Long distance routes pass through the LCT, including the Pennine Way National Trail, Rochdale Way and Rotary Way, which link to a strong rights of way network. Many routes crossing the moorland are based on historic packhorse routes.*

Views and perceptual qualities

- *Long, panoramic views are afforded by the high elevation of the landscape. There is often intervisibility with the dramatic Dark Peak moorlands of the Peak District National Park, particularly in the eastern parts of the LCT.*
- *The landscape evokes a strongly rural, remote and continuation of character of the Pennine uplands with gritstone walls, traditional farms, sheep grazed pastures and rough moorland.*
- *This landscape is often associated with a sense of openness, remoteness and isolation. This perception can be broken in places by views of urban development and the presence of intrusive modern features including the M62 motorway.*
- *Wind turbines and pylons/overhead lines punctuate the mostly open and undeveloped skylines. Masts are a feature of higher ground and are occasionally found in clusters.*
- *Within the stream valleys, there is a contrasting sense of enclosure due to topography and woodland cover.*

2.8.4 The assessment additionally notes intactness and condition:

“Issues which impact on intactness and condition include stone-wall boundary loss and subsequent replacement by post and wire fencing and urban fringe influences adjacent to development, including the proliferation of horse keeping in some localised areas (with associated structures and features including pony tape). Large-scale wind turbines and pylon lines form dominant features on the otherwise undeveloped skylines. Active quarrying operations introduce noise and movement, which detract from the remote and tranquil qualities of the landscape. Litter (particularly along roads and in car parks) and fly tipping are also issues within this landscape. Some areas are frequently used for illegal off-roading (predominantly with dirt bikes and quads) resulting in damage to important habitats.”

2.8.5 The GMLCSA assesses the overall landscape sensitivity for the LCA with regards to all development types, outlining locations directly adjacent to the Peak District National Park as highly sensitive.

2.8.6 The GMLCSA provides guidance and opportunities for future development and landscape management/enhancement for the Landscape Character Type through the following statements:

- *“Avoid siting any development on the unenclosed upland moorland and in areas on the immediate edge of the Peak District National Park. Also avoid development on steeply sloping areas or on complex landforms.*
- *Ensure that the design of any development is in-keeping with existing form, size and vernacular of the area, replicating traditional styles and materials where possible. Avoid any large scale developments due to the overall sparse settlement character.*
- *Protect and where possible enhance the valued mosaic of semi-natural habitats, including internationally designated areas of heather moorland, blanket bog, acid grassland and wet and dry heathland.*

Conserve semi-natural habitats within the upland fringe including broadleaved woodland, species rich grassland and wetlands.

- *Seek to restore the landscape structure of the enclosed upland fringe areas through the ongoing maintenance of the distinctive gritstone walls and the restoration of areas which have been damaged or deteriorated.*
- *Utilise existing woodland cover to integrate any development into the landscape.*
- *Ensure that any required road upgrades are in-keeping with the existing character of the narrow tracks and lanes.*
- *Ensure the visual character of the landscape is retained. Avoid development where it would be prominent on the broad, sweeping skylines. Protect long, uninterrupted views from higher ground over the mill settlements in the valleys below, and Greater Manchester communities beyond.*
- *Conserve and protect the setting of valued heritage features, including the Scheduled remains at Blackstone Edge Moor, Castleshaw and Knott Hill, Smithills Hall and Park and Garden, historic villages and numerous historic buildings including churches and country houses.*
- *Retain the important recreation function of the landscape, which is important both locally and to the wider region.*
- *Protect the overriding rural, remote characteristics of the landscape. Ensure that the traditional management of the landscape continues, part sheep grazing.*
- *Ensure any new development does not adversely affect the special qualities of the Peak District National Park, including its beautiful views, sense of tranquillity and dark night skies, and the vital benefits that flow beyond its boundary.*
- *Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology and subsequent knock-on effects, such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off which may impact on nearby major rivers including the River Tame, River Roch and River Tonge. “*

- 2.8.7 The landscape with immediacy to the east is categorised within LCA 28 - Rochdale and Oldham Pennine Foothills and as a result of its proximity should be taken into consideration. The key characteristics include:

Topography, geology and drainage

- *Transitional landscape sloping up from the northern fringes of Greater Manchester towards the uplands of the South and West Pennines.*
- *Strongly rolling and undulating topography punctuated by locally distinctive hills and carved by intricate stream valleys. Elevation ranges from 100 to over 350 metres AOD at Besom Hill.*
- *Primary underlying geology of Pennine Coal Measures, with areas of Millstone Grit overlain with glacial till deposits. Soil fertility is generally*

poor, with much of the LCT defined as Grade 4 agricultural land, with some pockets defined as Grade 3.

- *Streams drain through cloughs to a number of reservoirs, although these are generally smaller than those on higher ground within the Unenclosed Uplands and Fringes LCT.*

Land use and field patterns

- *Land use is dominated by lush semi-improved grassland pastures enclosed by a mix of gritstone walls, hedgerow boundaries and post and rail fencing. Horse paddocks are often found adjacent to settlement.*
- *Varied small-medium scale enclosures, divided by a mixture of field boundaries including gritstone walls, hedgerows and post and rail fencing. Field are predominantly piecemeal post-medieval enclosures, with some modern agglomeration.*
- *Various other land uses, including quarries and reservoirs and frequent recreational facilities such as golf clubs. Country Parks are located at Tandle Hill (Oldham District) and Hollingworth (Rochdale District).*

Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- *Numerous semi-natural habitats scattered throughout the farmland including woodland, grassland, heathland and streams/brooks, some of which are locally designated as sites of Biological Importance.*
- *Well wooded landscape with extensive tree and woodland cover with trees in stream valleys, along field boundaries and avenues of trees along roads. Tracts of dense broadleaved woodland also define cloughs, including large areas of ancient woodland.*
- *Reservoirs including Hollingworth Lake (designated as a site of Biological Importance) enhance the nature conservation interest and are important for wintering waterfowl.*

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- *Numerous Conservation Areas reflecting the historic character of settlements, including Ainsworth, Nangreaves, Stone Breaks, Clegg Village and Riding Gate which contain clusters of Listed Buildings.*
- *A number of historic buildings are scattered throughout the landscape including Grade II* Listed Buildings including Clegg Hall, Grotton Hall and Birchinley Manor Farmhouse.*
- *Evidence of the area's industrial heritage in the form of old mill buildings, chimneys, disused quarries and mines and the Rochdale Canal.*

Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- *Settlement mainly comprises scattered traditional stone farmsteads and halls, with some small groups of dwellings including Victorian terraces. The largest settlement is Ainsworth, located between Bury*

and Bolton. The foothills provide an important separation function between distinct urban areas.

- *Numerous footpaths and bridleways cross and provide access to the landscape from nearby urban areas and also link to the moorlands. These include the Rotary Way, Oldham Way and Rochdale Way.*
- *Road pattern mainly comprises minor winding lanes and tracks connecting farms. Occasionally, more major routes cross through the LCT, including the M62 and several A-roads.*

Views and perceptual qualities

- *Variable visual character depending on topography and vegetation cover; there are long views across the urban conurbation to the West and South Pennine uplands beyond where vegetation allows. Areas within the Peak District National Park are visible from some vantage points. Other areas are visually enclosed due to valleys or vegetation which creates wooded skylines.*
- *Occasionally, masts and pylons/overhead lines intrude on the wooded skylines. Other intrusive modern influences include the M62 motorway and prominent views of urban development, including tower blocks breaking horizons.*
- *Other skyline features including chimneys, the war memorial in Tandle Hill Country Park and views to monuments on higher ground within the uplands including Peel Tower and Bishop Park Monument.*
- *Windswept and exposed on higher ground as the landscape transitions to the upland fringe. This contrasts with the sheltered, enclosed feel of the valleys which have limited views in and out.*
- *Areas with relatively high levels of tranquillity despite the close proximity of urban development and major infrastructure e.g. Tandle Hill Country Park.*

2.8.8 The assessment further notes intactness and condition:

“Despite the close proximity of urban development, this is a strongly rural and traditional working landscape characterised by pasture fields, reservoirs and wooded stream cloughs with a transitional, upland fringe feel. Trees are frequent and provide a naturalistic quality to the landscape and characterise skylines. Locally designated habitats actively managed for the benefit of wildlife are found throughout the foothills landscape. Some former industrial and agricultural buildings have been converted to new uses, often retaining traditional features.

The deterioration of stone walls is visible in many places, with supplementation by post and wire fencing frequently occurring. Adjacent to settlements, there are often urban fringe influences including areas of horseculture with associated structures and pony tape and numerous golf courses. Within the wooded stream valleys, invasive species are present including large areas of rhododendron which outcompete native vegetation. Anti-social behaviour including fly tipping and litter has an adverse effect on the landscape in some localities. Pylon lines and masts form intrusive modern features on the skyline, while noise and movement introduced by transport infrastructure can detract from the rural qualities and sense of tranquillity in the landscape.”

- 2.8.9 In the context of the published landscape character assessment, the site is situated within a matrix of pastoral fields, defined by mature hedgerows, hedgerow trees and dry-stone walls. The site reaches an elevation of 160M AOD at its highest point, observing a gradual eastward slope of roughly 2m. The immediate feature of most note is the woodland tree belt to the north of the site, providing a mature and verdant feature. The surrounding landscape is dominated by the key features of Hollingworth Lake Country Park and the Pennine Foothills, with the site situated at a lower foothill.

2.9 Landscape Planning Policy

- 2.9.1 Rochdale Borough Core Strategy (Adopted 2016) (RBCS) sets out a long-term spatial strategy for the future of the borough and sets out Strategic Objectives (SO) to achieve a sustainable borough. These include:

“SO2 – Creating successful and healthy communities,

SO3 – Improving design, image and quality of place,

SO4 – Promoting a greener environment,

SO5 – Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport”

- 2.9.2 The RBCS includes the following policies relating to the site and type of development proposed:

- 2.9.3 **Policy P1: Improving image** – Improving the borough’s image has significant social and economic benefits and, as such, high quality design is required in all new developments. This may be achieved by demonstrating innovation and originality; contributing to public art projects; helping to green the environment; promoting the development and re-use of under-used land and buildings; and of particular relevance, creating people-friendly, safe, vibrant, uncluttered public areas.

- 2.9.4 **Policy P2: Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage** – Through the utilisation of their considerable potential, future developments should enhance the borough’s character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside, and the qualities of its landscapes. New developments should integrate successfully with key natural features whilst protecting and opening up important views of hills and valleys.

- 2.9.5 **Policy P3: Improving design of new development** – All new developments, including associated landscaping, must adhere to high standards of design. Design principles of particular relevance to this proposal include:

- *“Enhancing the boroughs identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive.*
- *Incorporating design measures that design out crime and ensure developments and spaces are safe to use and access.*
- *Ensure that the intended functions of buildings and spaces are easily understood, and their entrances appropriately located and visible.*
- *Minimise impact upon the environment, and help adapt to the impacts of climate change, including by re-using existing buildings and materials (maximising the benefits of existing embodied energy) and utilising sustainable drainage (Policies G1 and G2);*
- *Reduce the monotony and visual impact of car parking areas by using substantial and well integrated landscaping.”*

- 2.9.6 **Policy G4: Protecting Green Belt Land** – The Pennine rural fringe to the north and east of the borough, in which the site is situated, will be protected from development to prevent encroachment into the countryside. As such, development will be restricted to those deemed not to be inappropriate by national planning policies unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.
- 2.9.7 **Policy G5: Managing Protected Open Land** – Protection of open land outside of urban areas must be managed to appropriately balance its justified release to meet development needs and restriction to prevent urban encroachment.
- 2.9.8 **Policy G6: Enhancing green infrastructure** – Support growth and regeneration within the borough by sustaining and enhancing a green network and providing a high-quality environment that meets the needs of the community and visitors. Green spaces and water bodies must be protected and improved in order to ensure that their value to sustainable development and regeneration is maximised. Priorities include improved opportunities for recreation in urban areas and the countryside, improved opportunities for a healthy lifestyle, and management and response to environmental risks.
- 2.9.9 Policy G6 additionally outlines a number of priority areas to be protected and improved through the creation of green infrastructure. Those of relevance to this site include:
- “4) Other river valleys and green corridors: where the focus will be on enhancing recreational links between urban areas and open countryside to allow passage of wildlife, provide local opportunities for recreation, improving visual amenity, and contribution to local and wider environmental management e.g. reducing air pollution and managing flood risk.*
- 5) Other water bodies (lakes, streams, reservoirs, ponds etc) where the focus will be on celebrating water and promoting water features as a key characteristic of the local landscape, to improve their recreational and biodiversity value, maximise their potential for flood risk management and to incorporate water features (existing and new) as part of new developments, public realm initiatives, town centre design and neighbourhood regeneration initiatives where practicable.*
- 6) Rochdale Canal corridor where the focus will be on promoting the use of the canal for navigation, protecting and conserving its nature conservation value, improving linkages to the National Cycle Route 66 (Connect 2) cycle route with visitor, employment and neighbourhood destinations and securing environmental improvements as part of canalside development.*
- 7) Countryside around towns where the focus will be on reclaiming derelict land, woodland planting and improvement, creating and improving paths and cycle networks to link town and country, promoting access to nature, improving flood risk management and maintaining a strong green belt.*
- 8) Local urban open spaces where the focus will be on improvements to the quality of accessible greenspace close to where people live and work (prioritising those areas with the greatest deficiency or need e.g. poor health or lack of private gardens), securing tree planting and other urban greening in new areas of public open space in town centres and housing growth areas, protecting allotments and supporting local food growing, enhancing flood risk management and protecting and improving urban wildlife value and natural areas.)”*
- 2.9.10 **Policy G7: Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity** – sites of biodiversity and geodiversity must be given full and appropriate recognition and protection. Opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity are strongly encouraged with all development resulting in a net gain, whilst no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity or

geodiversity interest. Specifically, development that enhances public access and enjoyment of the countryside is to be supported.

- 2.9.11 **Policy T2: Improving accessibility** – Development that offers greater access for all forms of travel will assist the borough's continuous improvement to becoming more sustainable, healthier, greener and prosperous.

2.10 Site Appraisal

- 2.10.1 To illustrate the visibility of the site, a selection of views have been chosen (site Photographs 1-12) to illustrate the character and visibility of the site, see **Figure 3: Site Appraisal** and **Appendix A: Site Photographs**.
- 2.10.2 The site is situated to the north-east of Rakewood Road and comprises a parcel of arable land centrally divided by a sparse corridor of native hedgerow trees. The site lies low within the landscape, screened to both the west and north by the engineered banks, resultant of the construction of Hollingworth Lake and Hollingworth Lake Country Park Visitor Centre with associated car park. This screening is further reinforced by a mature native hedgerow band and mature woodland belt in the west and north respectively, providing a rural, agricultural character. To the south-east, the site is naturally delineated by Hollingworth Brook, which divides the site from its wider arable setting. This division is slightly bolstered by sporadic hedgerow trees and marginal vegetation, which partially screens views outwards from the site. Views south from the site provide a more open feel, expanding to a wider panoramic heathland landscape of the Pennines. This denotes the site as a point on the fringe on transition from a pastoral to heathland landscape.

2.11 Visual Appraisal

- 2.11.1 From the existing Hollingworth Lake Country Park Visitor Centre car park, views into the site are heavily filtered by a mature woodland belt, with shrub undergrowth creating a sense of enclosure from the wider landscape, as illustrated in **Site Photograph 1**.
- 2.11.2 There are limited views from the local road network resultant of the existing topography and intervening vegetation. Immediately to the east, an elevated views over the site may be observed from a short section of Rakewood Road, as illustrated in **Site Photographs 2 – 5**. Beyond this location views from the wider road network are heavily restricted by intervening landform alongside mature vegetation and built form .
- 2.11.3 From a local area to the south, PRoW 473 passes along the rising landform with views across to the site possible. The site forms a limited part of the foreground adjacent to the reservoir and part of a wider panoramic view with the site seen in the context of the existing car park beyond and the existing settlement edge, as illustrated by **Site Photographs 6 and 7**.
- 2.11.4 With consideration to the surrounding dwellings and farmhouses to the east, views to the site are largely long distance, with views beyond the site heavily restricted by the embanked earth of Hollingworth Lake, as demonstrated in **Site Photographs 8 and 9**. The view of the site is experienced as the fringe of the existing arable landscape, sheltered by the elevated woodland belt.
- 2.11.5 The site appraisal and field work has informed the development of the Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan – see **Figure 4: Site Photographs**. This will be used to inform the development of the future proposals, to include location of development and nature and character of the proposed Green Infrastructure.

3 Review of Contribution of the site to the Functions of the Green Belt

Criteria	Discussion	Contribution to Green Belt Purpose
Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	The site lies adjacent to existing parking facilities and is well serviced by Rakewood Road and an access road. Although the proposed development would minimally expand the existing urban coverage, the development relates strongly to current usage and demand from the surrounding built environment. The development proposals have considered the existing habitat networks and provided a series of green links, which in conjunction with a well-considered local planting plan which together with the existing topography will minimise any perception of sprawl.	Very limited
Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	The site is located 500m east of the urban fringes of Smithy Bridge, whilst observing a greater distance from Littleborough in the North. Due to the degree of separation of the site from existing neighbourhoods, alongside the scale and extents of the development, it is considered that the proposal would not contribute to the merging of nearby towns.	None
Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The character of the site reflects its current usage as an arable field, bounded by a brook to the east and north, hedgerow to the south and a woodland tree block to the north. A steep grass embankment separates the site from Rakewood Road, minimising its exposure to the wider landscape in the east. This delineation of the site by natural and existing boundaries, alongside the minimisation of hard surfacing in the design result in a naturalistic development of the land and optimisation of the use of the land. Development within the site may result in a minimal loss of countryside due to its location outside of the urban area of Littleborough and Smithy Bridge, however, the existing boundaries to the site would strongly prevent further encroachment.	Very limited
Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The site does not lie within or close to any designation for landscape value, conservation area or contain any listed buildings. The closest scheduled monument is situated over 3km south east and, therefore, has no significance to the site. Although the site is situated on lower ground to its surroundings, its impact on the surrounding landscape will be significantly reduced through the proposed planting scheme extending existing vegetation. The existing hedgerow and woodland tree belt will be conserved as part of the development proposal, emphasising and strengthening the local character.	Very limited
Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Should the site be brought forward for development it would not prejudice derelict or other urban land being brought forward for urban regeneration. However, the principle of retaining land within the Green Belt holds true for all areas within the Green Belt, therefore the site is considered to make the same contribution to this purpose of the Green Belt as any other land parcel within the Green Belt. Accordingly, no additional specific assessment is undertaken.	None

- 3.1.1 Overall, the site's current contribution to the wider function of the Green Belt is very limited due to the character and natural value of its immediate surroundings. The site is separated from the wider landscape by the natural topography and intervening Hollingworth Brook and is well connected to existing development and infrastructure networks. The combination of these defined boundaries and existing connections would not result in urban sprawl and would preserve the setting and safeguard the countryside from encroachment.
- 3.1.2 The NPPF states that the key characteristics of the Green Belt are "their openness and their permanence". Due to the site comprising predominantly open agricultural land with a lack of built and engineered forms, it is considered to be inherently open. Whilst creation of a car park will result in a substantial change to the site, it will not impact upon the sense of openness in the wider agricultural landscape. Should the site be developed as per the design considerations set out in Section 4 of this report, the openness and essential characteristics of the remaining designated area will remain intact.

4 Landscape & Visual Opportunities and Constraints

4.1.1 The proposed development will result in a highly localised landscape and visual effect.

4.1.2 Visual receptors likely to be affected by the proposed development are very limited:

- Users of the PRoW with close proximity to the site - FP468, FP471 and FP473 are of particular relevance, although, due to variance in elevation, PRoW users within the wider context may observe distance views of and over the site;
- Partial views from pedestrians and vehicle users from Rakewood Road to the east; and;
- Working agricultural properties located adjacent to Rakewood Road and the end of Eales Road to the northeast.

4.1.3 **Figure 4: Landscape and Visual Opportunities and Constraints Plan** highlights the landscape and visual sensitivities that will have to be considered when developing the site, particularly during construction, and identifies opportunities for landscape mitigation and potential landscape and biodiversity enhancement.

4.1.4 Constraints to be addressed through the design of the proposed development and the Construction Management Plan:

- Protect existing trees and hedgerows during construction, especially those with close proximity observing the historic field boundaries;
- Retain access to and enhance the existing PRoW that runs parallel to the sites northern boundary;
- Where possible, reduce the views into the site from points of higher elevation within the Pennine Foothills to the southeast;
- Protect and enhance the existing habitats, such as badger sets, and provide green links to the surrounding environment;
- Reduce the total coverage of hard surfacing to reduce surface runoff to the neighbouring waterways.

4.1.5 Opportunities for landscape mitigation in keeping with local landscape character and guidance, and potential for landscape and ecological enhancement include:

- **Green buffer / corridors** – Enhance the existing green buffers adjacent to the site boundaries, providing a structurally graded aesthetic whilst providing additional habitat benefit.
- **Retain existing landscape framework as part of the proposals** – allow for the inclusion of existing on-site landscape features to be sensitively located within and around the proposed development as part of the site wide green infrastructure which will provide a mature setting from the outset. Feature trees will be planted at key entry locations to improve legibility and create natural points of interest around the site.
- **Provide green links through the site** – Badger sets situated within the woodland tree belt to the north are to be protected, with the retention and expansion of native species throughout the site providing a wider range of habitat. Further to this, corridors are to be

provided through wildflower planting as to allow for continued networks to the wider landscape.

- **Repair and enhance the existing hedgerow and tree network** – using local native climate resilient species for hedges and trees. Restored or new boundaries should reflect local characteristics, including the planting of a new generation of hedgerow trees and tree belts and woodland.
- **Retain the verdant character of the streetscene** - and set development back beyond a landscape buffer that includes woodland planting and native species of local provenance.
- **Enhancement of the water course and wetland habitat** - potential for the sustainable drainage features within the site to connect and provide enhancement to the local watercourse / field drainage ditches, including developing greater areas of habit and biodiversity.

5 Development Proposals

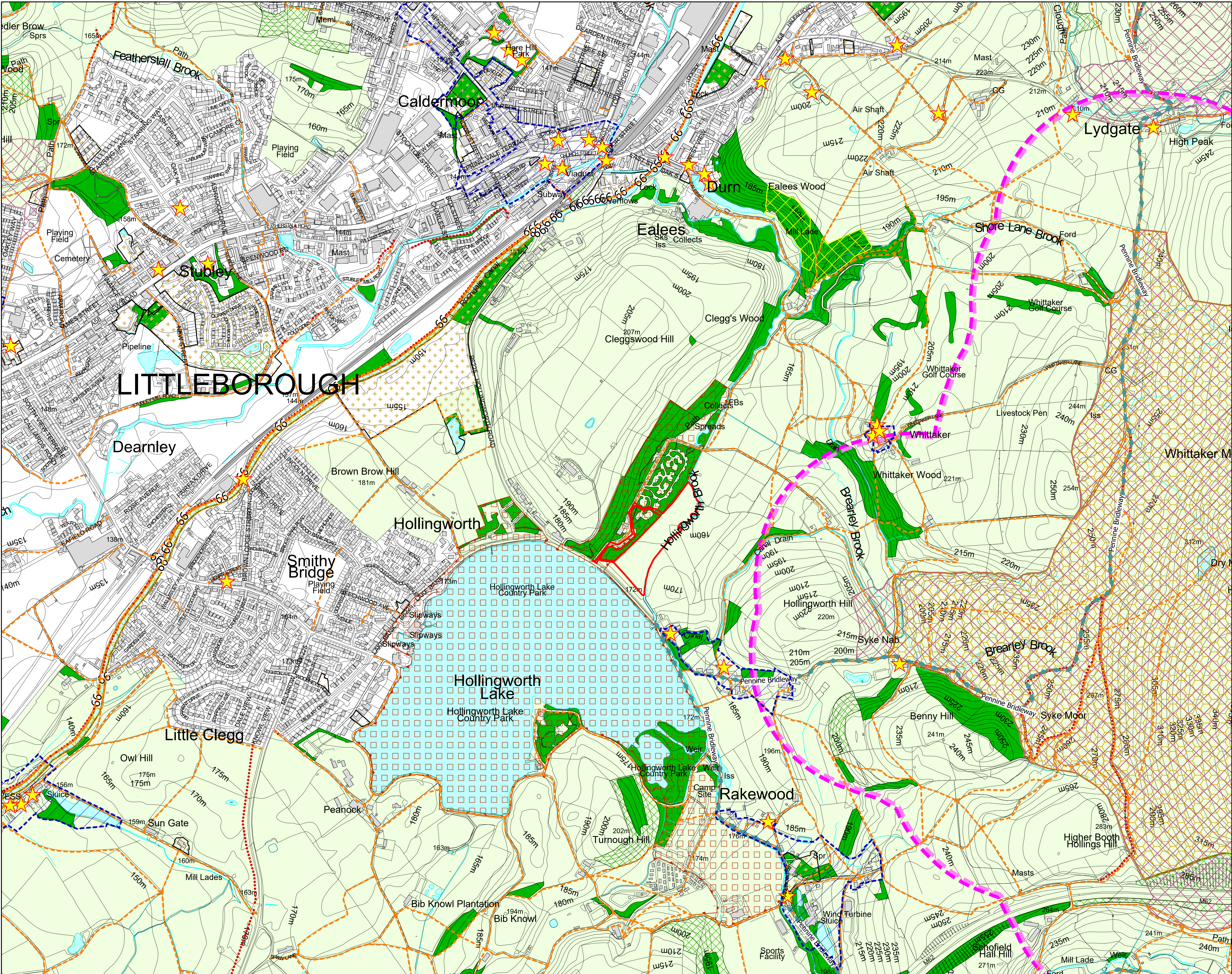
5.1 The Proposed Development

- 5.1.1 The proposal of a car park as an extension to the existing infrastructure of Hollingworth Car Park adjacent to Rakewood Road. The key features of the development include a tarmacked access road, planted conveyance swales, new pedestrian pathways, and new areas of parking surfaced with permeable and drivable gravel.
- 5.1.2 The proposal will retain and enhance the existing planting within the site and along the site boundaries wherever possible, utilising the existing landscape to add character and structure to the development whilst protecting the overriding rural, remote characteristics.
- 5.1.3 The proposed development as existing trees and hedgerows along the northern and western boundaries, which will be utilised to integrate development into the landscape. It may necessitate the loss or removal of vegetation for development and access routes, though this will be limited to an absolute minimum to meet requirements and will be mitigated and enhanced where possible.
- 5.1.4 The introduction of native trees and meadow mix seeding within the site aims to enhance the valued mosaic of semi-natural habitats. Further to this, on lower lying areas of the site, designed-in SuDS features, such as planted conveyance swales, may provide increased biodiversity.
- 5.1.5 The proposed development will retain the recreation function of the landscape and enhance public access and enjoyment of the countryside through its strong connectivity to local PRoW and National Trail networks.

6 Conclusion: Landscape and Visual opportunities and Constraints

- 6.1.1 On the basis of this analysis of the landscape and visual baseline, it is concluded that there is potential for sensitive development of the site, subject to a number of opportunities and constraints and strategic design principles. These are illustrated on **Appendix A: site Photographs** and set out below.
- 6.1.2 The site sits on a lower foothill, screened to the west by earth bunding resultant of the construction of the existing car park and Hollingworth Lake. The Pennine Foothills partially overlook the site to the southeast, whilst the notable wooded belt to the north provides a strong boundary that shelters the site from the linear urban settlement of Littleborough to the north. The roughly linear arable fields with immediate vicinity to the site are delineated by mature hedgerows, hedgerow trees and drystone walls, encapsulating the local landscape character. Development of closest proximity to the site is situated in Smithy Bridge, a suburb of Littleborough, connected by Rakewood Road.
- 6.1.3 Development within the site would form a logical extension to the existing car park and facilities in the area, utilising existing infrastructure and maintaining and enhancing the surrounding land use. Due to the high degree of screening existing adjacent to the site through both topographical variation and vegetation, sensitive planting and conservation of key characteristics, such as the woodland tree belt and mature hedgerows, would allow for the development to complement and enhance the existing character of the surrounding landscape.
- 6.1.4 Further to this, the proposal looks to greatly increase the tree cover within the site, through both native and climate resilient planting. This planting provides an increase in habitat extents, whilst feature trees will be planted at key entry locations to improve legibility and create natural points of interest around the site.
- 6.1.5 There is substantial potential for multi-functional and locally distinctive Green Infrastructure to provide a positive and accessible settlement edge landscape. Beyond the open green slopes, there would be enhanced areas of wetland on the lower lying parts of the site, including sustainable drainage (SuDS) basins or ponds, enhancing the legibility of the topography and providing increased biodiversity opportunity.
- 6.1.6 In relation to Planning Policy P2: Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage, the development of the site will be high quality, with a careful design approach adopted which has resulted in the proposals clearly responding to the onsite topographical and hydrological constraints. The existing mature vegetation framework within the site will be retained and enhanced with development set within a characteristic landscape setting that will reflect the local character.
- 6.1.7 In relation to Planning Policy G7: Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity, the proposed landscape strategy will provide a positive net gain, facilitating the expansion of existing habitats. Through the expansion of native habitats and enhancement of native hedgerows that will reinforce a strong green framework within which the development will be located.
- 6.1.8 It is therefore considered that in landscape and visual terms there is potential for a sensitive development of the site, that would be a logical extension of the existing settlement in relation to its distinctive topographic setting; would minimise harm to landscape character and views; and would provide potential for extensive locally characteristic and important multi-functional green infrastructure.

Figure 1: Site Context Plan



The scaling of this drawing cannot be assured
Revision Date Dm Ckd

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Existing Woodlands, Copses and Tree Belts ^
- Existing Scrub ^
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- Public Rights of Way *
- National Trails # / Long Distance Walks ^
- Countryside Rights of Way Access Areas #
- Sustrans Cycle Route +
- Cycle Route ++
- Listed Buildings ~
- Conservation Area ~/##
- Green Belt ^^
- Special Protection Area, 400m Buffer #
- Ancient Woodland #
- Country Park #
- Housing Allocation Sites ##

Sources:
GIS Mapping
^ Natural England GIS Data Set
~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
+ Rochdale Borough Council GIS Data Set
+ Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
+ Department of Transport Cycle Network Model
^^ Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data
Rochdale Borough Council Local Plan Proposals Map Adopted

Data collected for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation; inexact using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

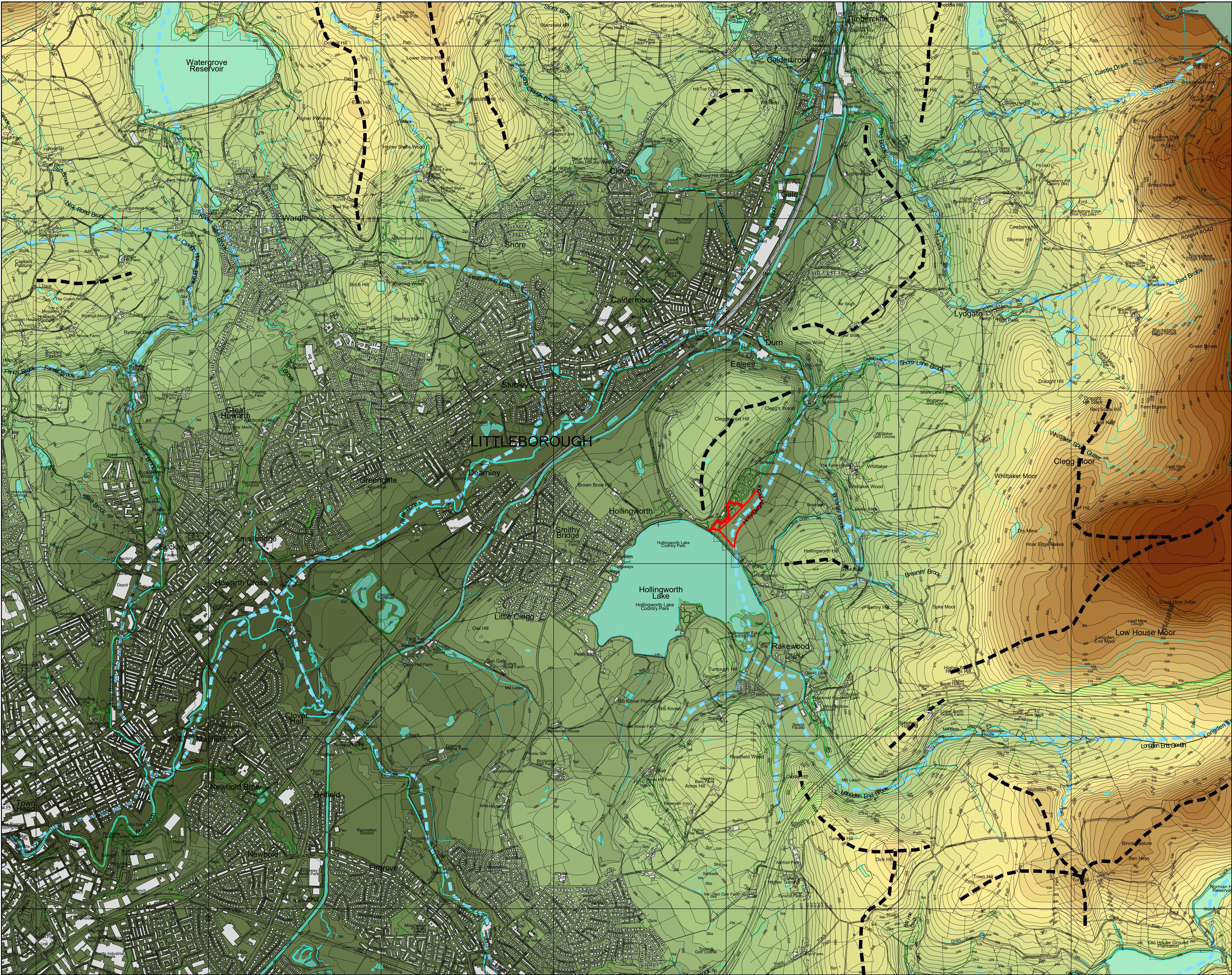
FIGURE 1

Project:
Rakewood Car Park

Drawing Title:
Site Context Plan

Date 19.12.2023	Scale 1:5,000 @A1 1:10,000 @A3	Drawn by ML	Check by MF
Project No 35025	Drawing No LN-LP-02		Revision -

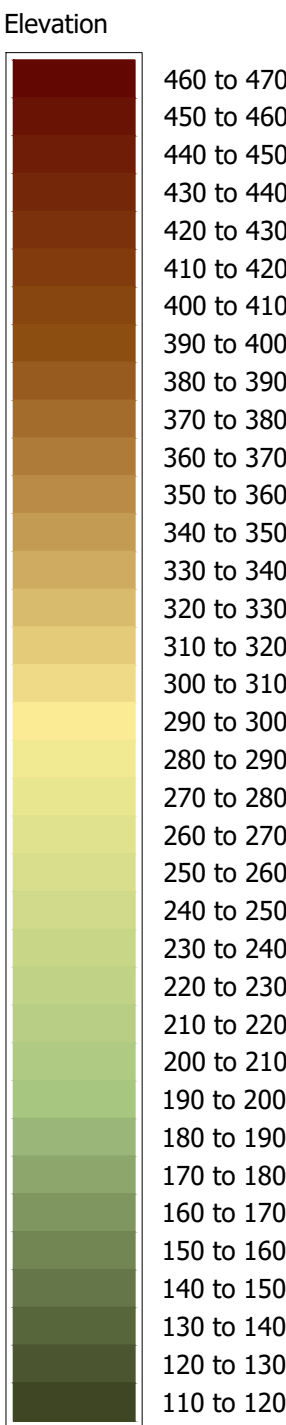
Figure 2: Topography Plan



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Revision Date Dm Ckd

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- Ridgelines
- Valleys



Sources:
^ OS Mapping
Data collected for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 2

Project
Rakewood Car Park

Drawing Title
Topography Plan

Date 19.12.2023	Scale 1:10,000 @A1 1:20,000 @A3	Drawn by ML	Check by MF
Project No 35025	Drawing No LN-LP-03	Revision -	



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Figure 3: Site Appraisal Plan



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Revision	Date	Drn	Ckd
-	-	-	-

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Existing Water Courses and Features ^
- Contours/Spot Heights (Metres AOD) ^
- Public Rights of Way *
- Listed Buildings ~
- Conservation Area ~
- Green Belt ^^
- Country Park #

Sources:

- ^ OS Mapping
- # Natural England GIS Data Set
- ~ Historic England National Monument Record GIS Data Set
- * Rochdale Borough Council GIS Data Set
- + Sustrans National Cycle Network GIS Data
- ++ Department of Transport Cycle Network Model
- ^^ Department for Communities and Local Government GIS Data

Aerial Photograph dated: 23/04/2021
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Data collated for constraints and analysis mapping is based on publicly available sources at the time of preparation inserted using the British National Grid and may itself not be accurate. Stantec shall not be liable for the accuracy of data derived from external sources.

FIGURE 3

Project
Rakewood Car Park

Drawing Title
Site Appraisal Plan

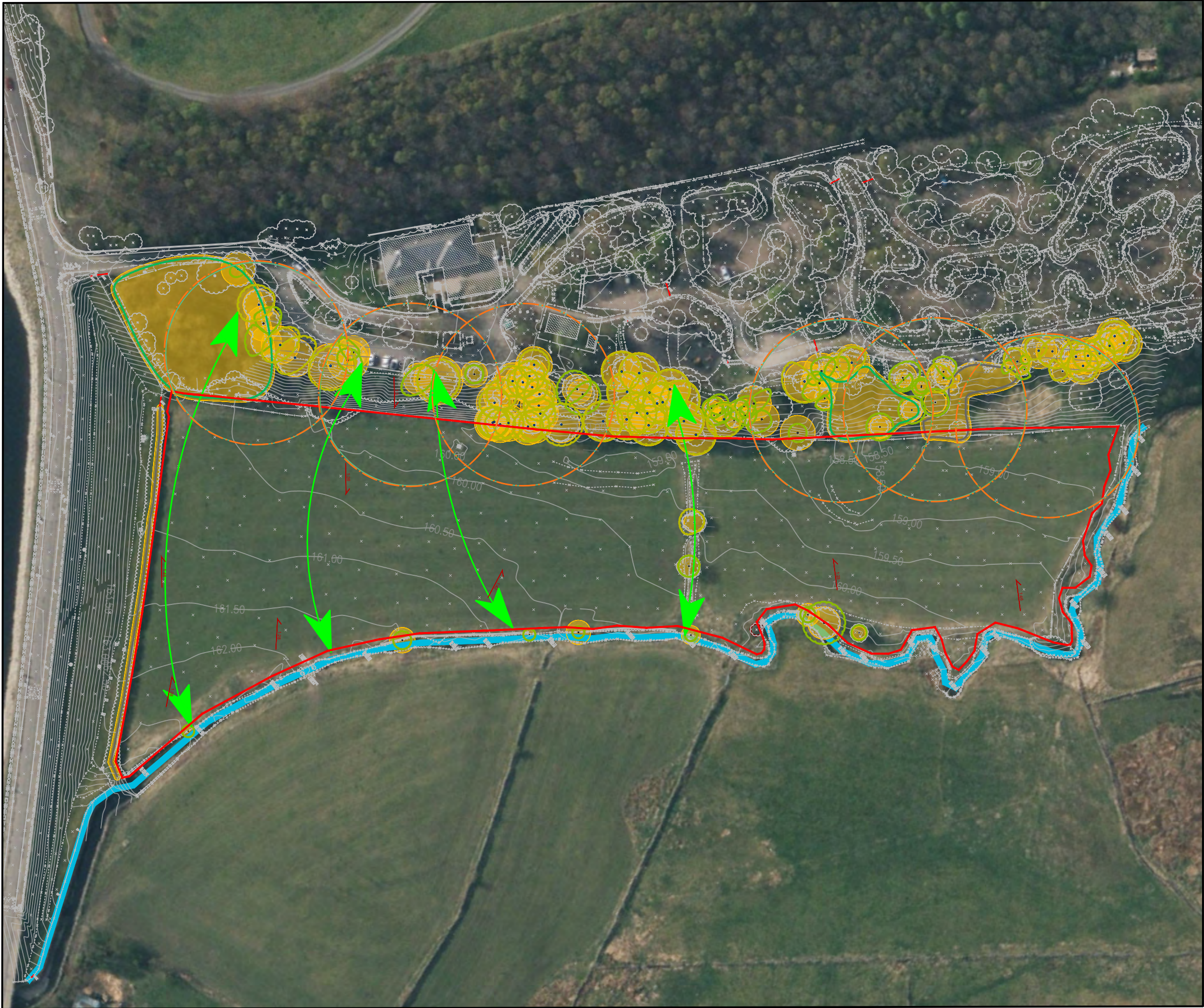
Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
19.12.2023	1:2,000 @A3	ML	MF
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
35025	LN-LP-05	-	



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**Figure 4: Landscape Opportunities and
Constraints Plan**



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Revision	Date	Drn	Ckd
-	-	-	-

LEGEND

- Site Boundary
- Root Protection Area
- Tree Canopy
- Gradient
- Water Course
- Green Links
- Ecological constraint

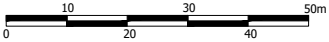
NOTES:
Aerial Imagery April 2021

FIGURE 4
Project
Rakewood Car Park

Drawing Title
Opportunities and Constraints Plan

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
04.01.2024	1:1250@A3	LG	ATC

Project No	Drawing No	Revision
35025	RG-LD-05	



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Figure 5: Landscape Strategy Plan

LEGEND

- Native woodland scrub mix managed to form a mixed height canopy.
- Native hedge obscuring sight lines from the adjacent road into the car park
- Native groundcover mix allowing views through the carpark and providing easy access to maintenance areas.
- General purpose meadow mix providing habitat for wildlife and aesthetic value for visitors
- Introduced native trees at a heavy standard size to provide instant impact and shading
- Permeable and drivable gravel surface held in a cellular crate system to all new areas of parking
- Self binding gravel path providing pedestrian access to the lake and a scenic route through new meadow planting
- Tarmac access road and pedestrian ramp to existing parking and visitor center
- Planted conveyance swale
- Reclaimed railway sleeper to car park edge and parking space divisions
- Red line site boundary

NOTES:
Refer to 35025-RG-LD-01-1 and 35025-RG-LD-01-2 for detailed general arrangement.
Refer to 35025-RG-LD-01 sheet 3 for planting maintenance and schedules
Refer to 35025-RG-LD-02 for illustrative sections
Refer to 35025-RG-LD-04 for typical details

FIGURE 5

Rakewood Car Park

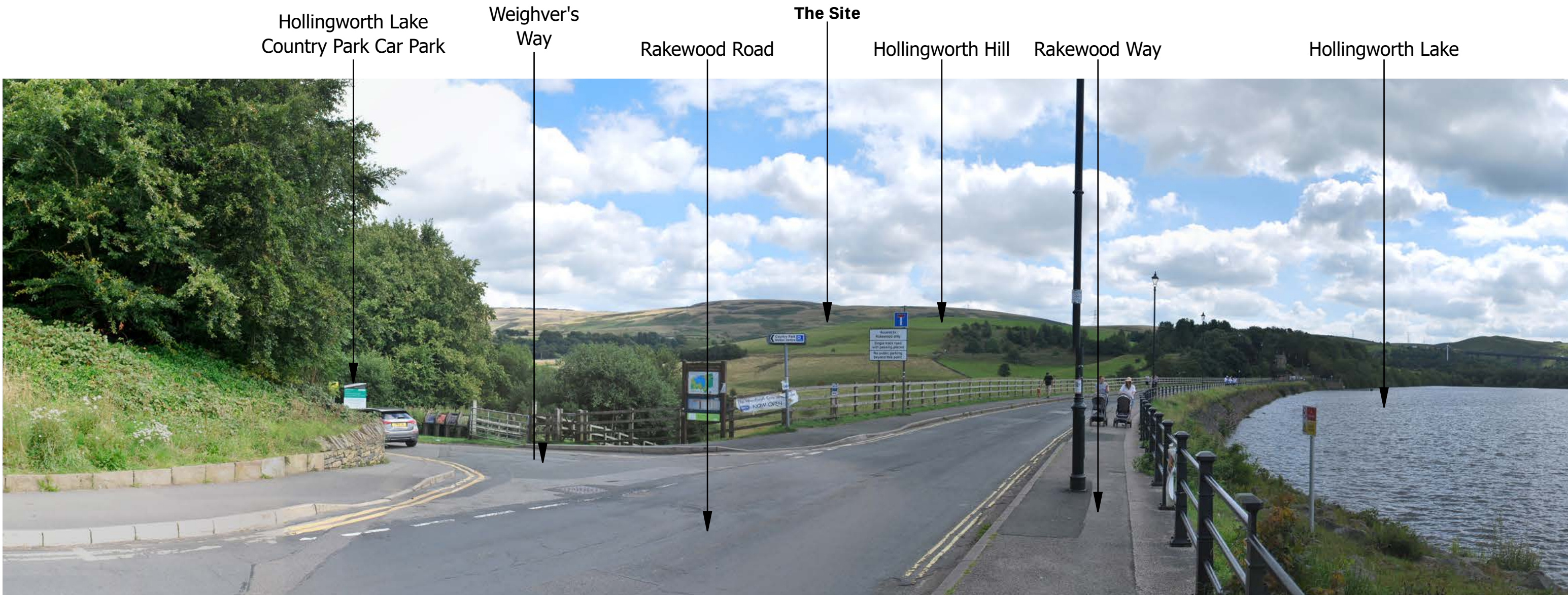
Landscape Strategy Plan

Date	Scale	Drawn by	Check by
14.12.2023	1:500 @A0	LG	ATC
Project No	Drawing No	Revision	
35025	35025-RG-LD-03	B	

Appendix A Site Photographs



Site Context Photograph 1: View looking East from Hollingworth Lake Country Park Car Park.



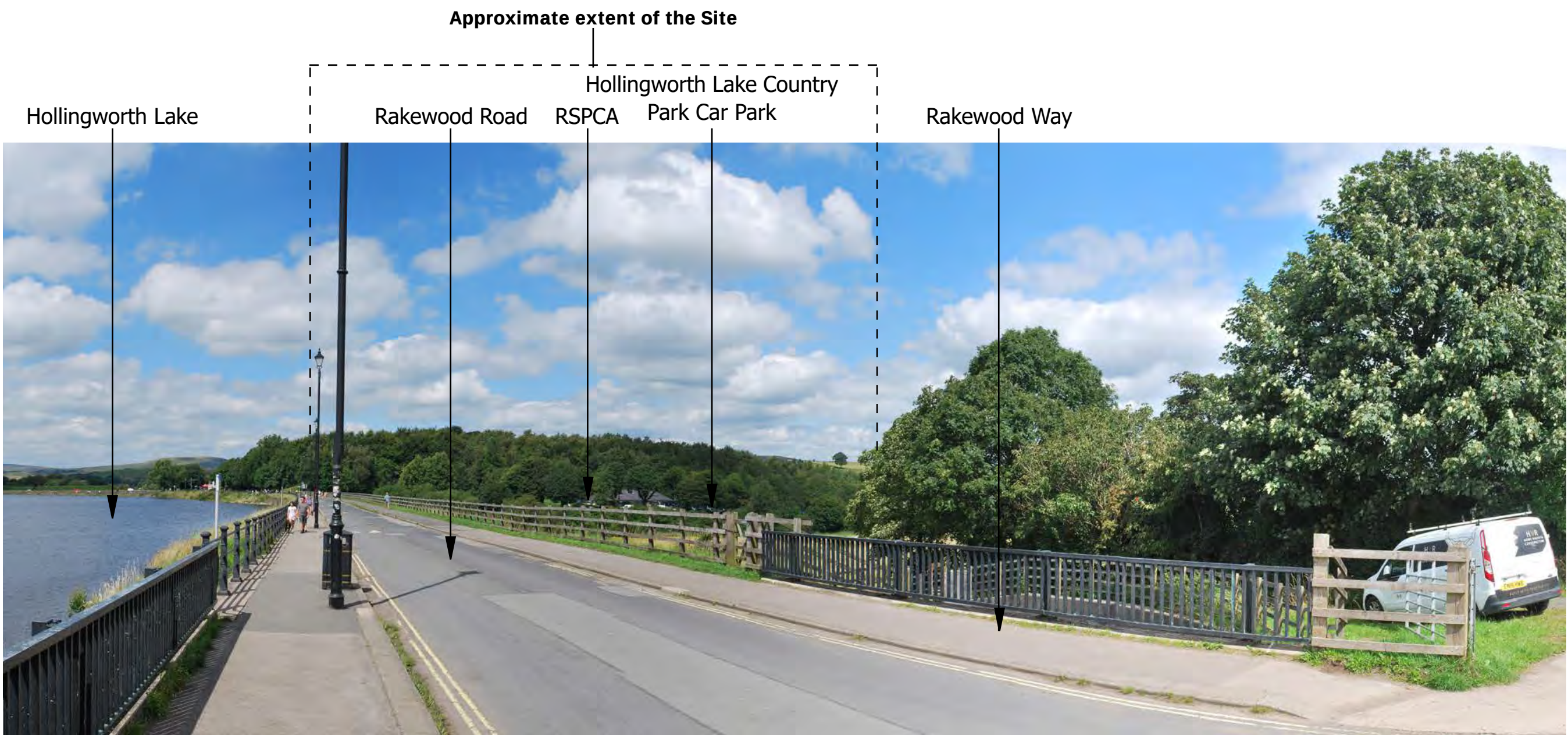
Site Context Photograph 2: View looking North-east from long distance path - Rakewood Way.



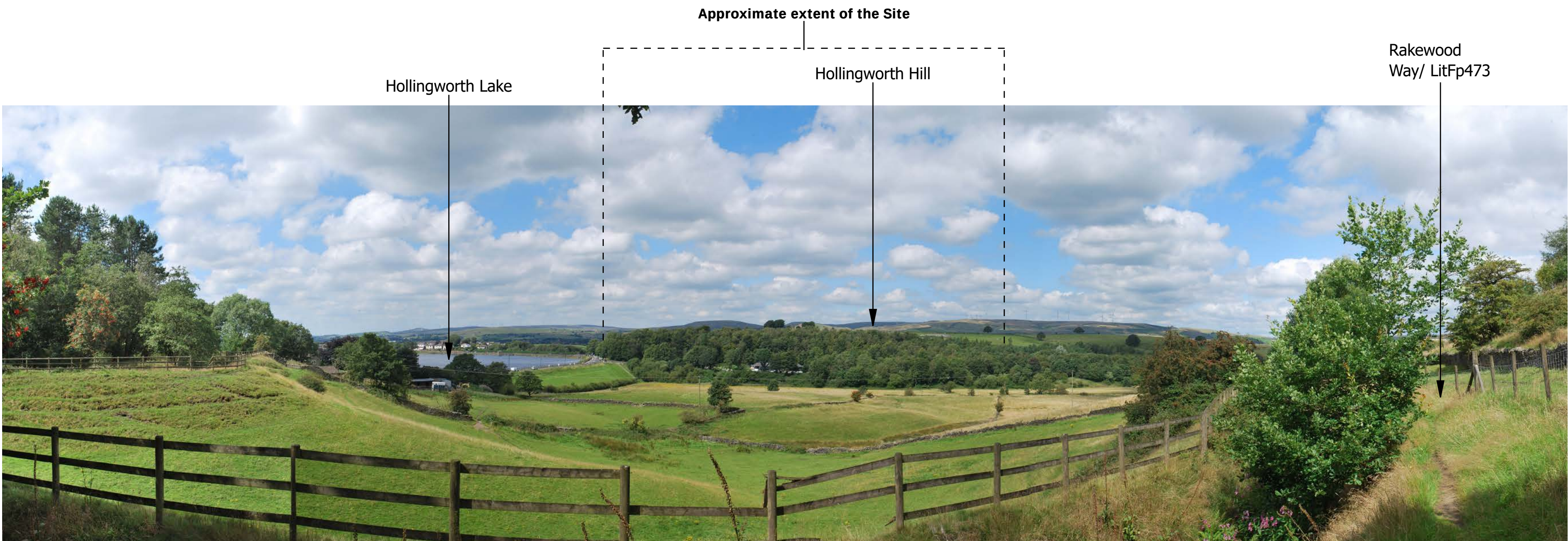
Site Context Photograph 3: View looking North-east from long distance path - Rakewood Way.



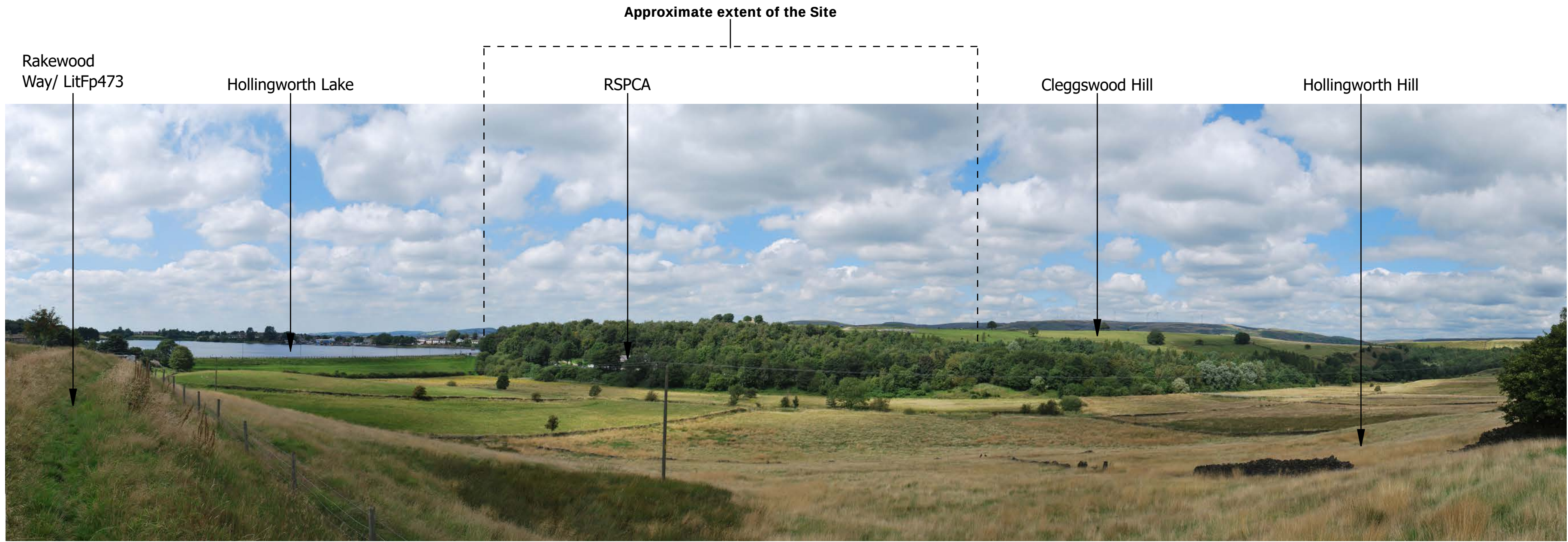
Site Context Photograph 4: View looking North from long distance path - Rakewood Way.



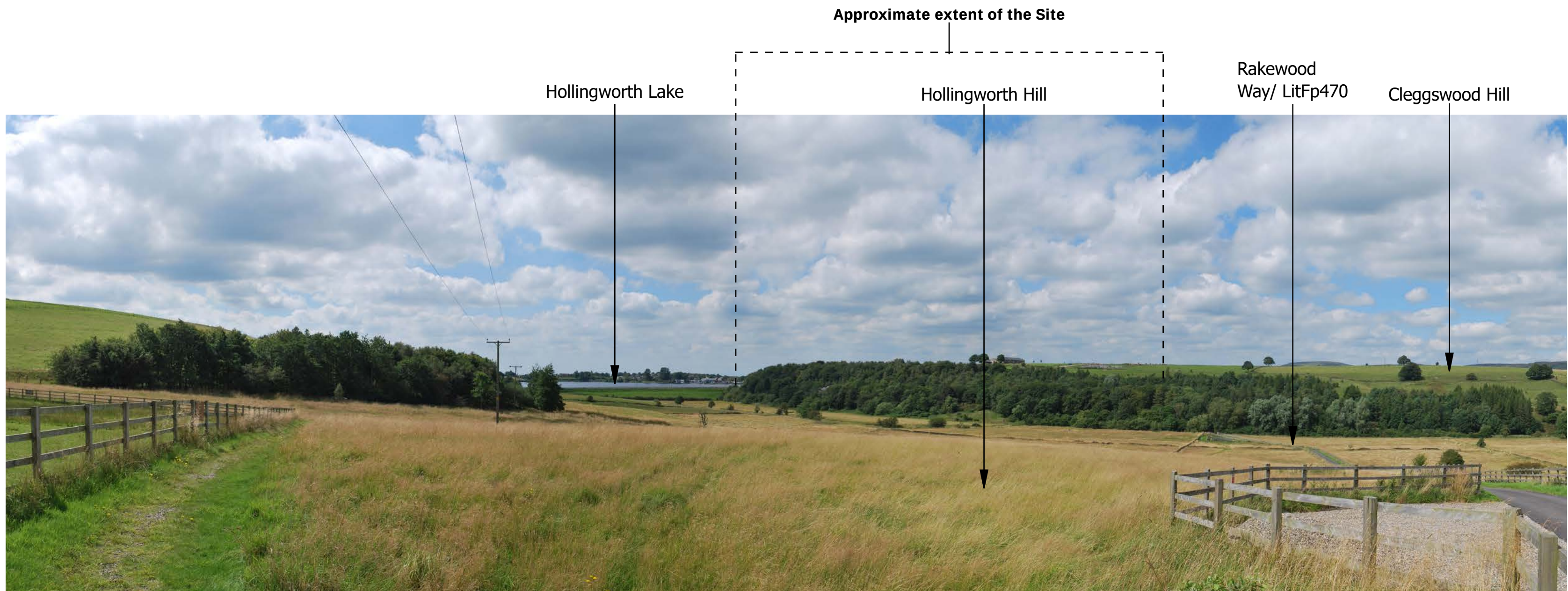
Site Context Photograph 5: View looking North-west from long distance path - Rakewood Way.



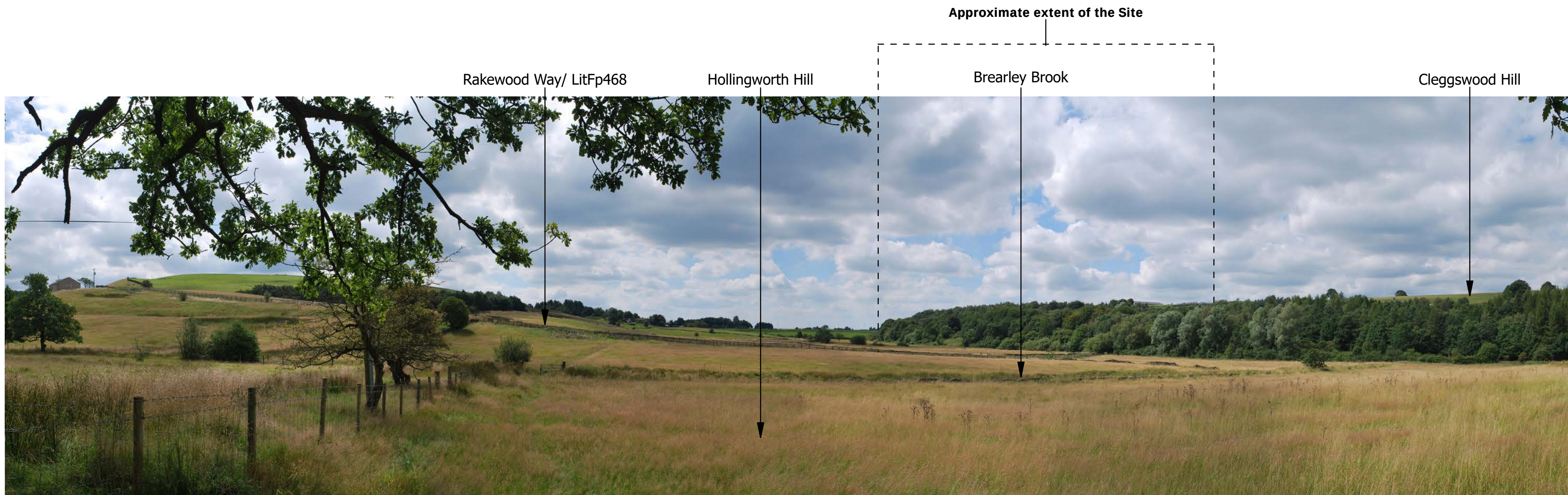
Site Context Photograph 6: View looking North-west from public footpath LitFp473.



Site Context Photograph 7: View looking West from public footpath - LitFp473.



Site Context Photograph 8: View looking West from long distance path - Rochdale Way/ public footpath - LitFp470.



Site Context Photograph 9: View looking South from public footpath - LitFp467.