

Landscape and Visual Appraisal
Proposed Bank Top Farm Shop
Hollingworth Road
Littleborough

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Rev A Correction of minor typos.

Rev B Updated to take account of revisions to proposals.

Rev C Minor amendments to text and diagrams.

Rev D Amendments to text in section 10 and 11

Rev E Amendments to text throughout resulting to revised building proposals

Rev F Further amendments to text throughout.

1.0 Introduction

Penny Bennett Landscape Architects have been commissioned to produce a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) for the development of a farm shop at Bank Top Farm, Hollingworth Road, Littleborough.

This is a small-scale development and this appraisal and the report is proportionate to the scale and type of development.

This Landscape and Visual Appraisal considers the effect of the proposed development on the landscape, that is the elements which make up the landscape and its character, and the visual effects it will have on the people in the vicinity whether they are residents, visitors or other users. This appraisal has been used to inform the development of the design, and as such it is an iterative report that will change as the design evolves. The report has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 3rd Edition 2013.

The proposal is for the erection of a farm shop, incorporating a butchery, and associated café with off road parking for up to 17 cars, including three accessible spaces, and space for cycles and motorcycles.

This appraisal considers a revised and smaller scale proposal in comparison to the scheme that was initially assessed, now being for a single storey building with a height of 4.6 m to the front elevation and 3.5 m at the rear, a reduction of 2.4 m compared to the previous scheme. The frontage of the shop has also reduced from 20.9 m to 17.9 m. The new scheme proposes a revised materials arrangement, significantly reducing the extent of glazing to the front elevation so it would be more typical in character to a traditional farm/ rural building. The removal of the upstairs community room means that evening use will no longer be a factor, so along with the reduction in glazing along the frontage the potential for nighttime lighting to be visible from the building has been removed.

Bank Top Farm lies on the eastern side of Hollingworth Road, the B6225, which runs roughly due south from Littleborough towards Hollingworth Lake. The farm itself lies at around 180 m AOD above the road, the farm shop site lies adjacent to the road at around 165 m AOD.

The site assessment was carried out during March and April 2022. An updated review of the Site and the surrounding context was carried out in August 2023. This includes reviewing the development proposals now being implemented on the former Akzo Nobel land to the west of the Site.

2.0 Scope of the Appraisal

This appraisal considers the effects of the proposed farm shop development on the landscape and the visual amenity of the Site and surrounding area.

For the purposes of assessing the landscape and visual effects of this proposal, the study areas have been defined as:

- The Site, shown on aerial photograph Figure 1.
- The landscape context, which extends to cover a zone approximately 500 metres in diameter.
- The visual study area which extends to cover an area of 500 metres radius from the Site at its furthest point.

The objectives of the assessment are to:

- Describe and evaluate the landscape of the Site, the landscape context and the visual amenity of the surrounding area which might be affected by the proposed development;
- Consider the development proposals and any effects on the landscape and visual amenity arising as a result of the scheme;
- Describe any enhancements to the landscape or visual amenity that may occur as a result of the proposals;
- Describe mitigation measures which could be used to reduce, offset or avoid potential adverse effects.

The landscape is considered as a shared resource in its own right, while the assessment of visual effects considers the effects on specific views and general amenity experienced by the public. Key aspects of the proposed development which are relevant to the landscape and visual effects have been determined, and baseline conditions established and recorded. This allows the significant effects to be predicted. Landscape and visual effects are each measured separately.



Figure 1 Aerial photograph, shaded area represents the location of the proposals; the star represents the housing proposals now being implemented.

3.0 Methodology

The European Landscape Convention 2000 defines the landscape as:

‘an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors’

In the context of this definition the assessment process seeks to consider the effects in an objective and systematic manner whilst recognising the perceptual and therefore subjective response to the landscape.

The approach adopted in this study follows recognised national guidance produced by the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in particular ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment’ (GLVIA) Third Edition 2013.

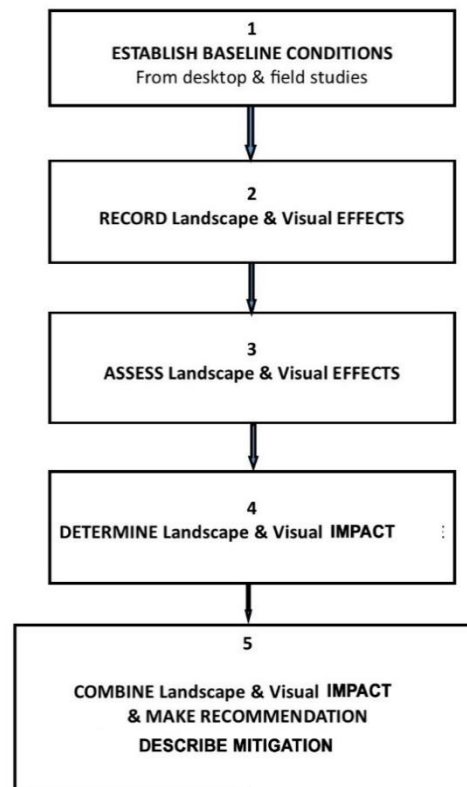
LVIA is a tool to identify the effects of change resulting from development and to assess the significance of those effects. It can be applied formally as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) or informally as in this study, as a contribution to the ‘appraisal’ of development proposals and planning applications. The following summarises the philosophy underpinning the assessment and the FIVE key STEPS in the process.

The assessment process combines desk study, field work and follow up analysis, and involved:

- Review of any landscape designations, planning policies relevant to landscape, and landscape character assessments relevant to the area;
- Survey of the Site and its landscape context, from publicly accessible viewpoints including public rights of way and bridleways, local parks and public open space, and local viewpoints, with photographs taken at key points;
- Evaluation of the features and elements of the landscape and their influence on the landscape character, context and setting;
- Objective consideration of the potential landscape and visual effects of the proposed development and assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape and visual amenity to the changes likely to arise from the development;
- Identification of the visual envelope within which the development might be visible and sensitive viewpoints and receptors (people, individuals or groups, who have the potential to be affected by a proposal);
- Consideration of proposals for mitigation measures to reduce, offset or avoid significant adverse effects, and where possible introduce measures which would be beneficial to the landscape.

The FIVE Steps to Assessment

The methodology can be summarised as:



STEP 1: Identify the Baseline Conditions

The **FIRST** step in the assessment process is to establish the existing or 'baseline' conditions that will form the basis for identifying and describing the changes that will result from a development proposal.

For the *landscape baseline* the aim is to understand the landscape in the area that might be affected and identify the *landscape receptors* including: its character area and type; the individual features; its condition; the way the landscape is experienced and the **Value** attached to it (both nationally or as perceived by the local community); the local green infrastructure and cultural heritage.

For the *visual baseline* the aim is to establish the area in which the development may be visible and identify the *visual receptors* i.e. the different groups of people who may experience views of the development, the places where they will be affected and the nature and value of the views and visual amenity at those points.

STEP 2: Record the Effects

The **SECOND** step in the assessment distinguishes between:

- Effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right
- Effects on specific views and general visual amenity experienced by people

Landscape – a professional judgement is made as to how the proposed development would interact with the landscape receptors, the **Value** of the receptor is taken account of and how **Susceptible** it is to change, including:

- positive/beneficial & negative/adverse effects
- Indirect, short term and cumulative effects
- Is there potential for mitigation to reduce the effects, for example through discrete siting of the buildings in the landscape or through existing or new planting

Susceptibility is the ability of the landscape receptor to accommodate the proposed development without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies.¹

Visual – the effect on the receptors is recorded including:

- Places where the receptors will be affected
- Nature of the views
- Importance of the visual amenity
- Value attached to the views by users
- The susceptibility of different receptors to changes in the view

The **Value** and the **Susceptibility** is recorded and combined in a matrix to give the **Sensitivity**.

STEP 3: Assess the Effects

Recording the landscape and visual effects identifies *what* will be affected by development. Step THREE determines the *extent* of those effects. This depends mainly upon the **sensitivity** of the landscape and how susceptible it is to changes brought about by development. A consideration of the size or scale of the development is undertaken and recorded as the **magnitude** of the effects noted as large, medium, small or negligible. This is done in a systematic way for both landscape and visual effects for each site.

STEP 4: Determine the Degree of Impact

The FOURTH step in the assessment is to combine the results for sensitivity and magnitude of the effects of development on both the landscape and the visual amenity. This, combined with professional judgement, determines how notable the impact of the effects would be, and whether this is adverse or positive.

STEP 5: Recommendations and Mitigation

Recommendations are then made on the best way to mitigate against any adverse impacts and more detailed mitigation proposals are proposed.

These may include:

- Identifying any areas of the site where the landscape and visual impacts are considered to be large and adverse, and development would be very detrimental on landscape and visual grounds.
- Identifying zones where different scales or styles of development may take place.
- Identifying where new screening planting might be best located to reduce any visual impact.

¹ GLVIA Third Edition para 5.40

- Identifying potential enhancements to existing green infrastructure by introducing new natural features such as hedges, native trees and sustainable drainage features.
- Understanding the scale and grain of existing development and how new development may affect this, particularly where this relates to prominent hillsides within the borough, and then making recommendations about building layout.
- Considering how new development would relate to the existing public footpath network and identifying how links could be made to this.
- Identifying important views and landmarks and considering how these can be retained to protect the sense of place.

4.0 Planning

Statutory planning issues are comprehensively covered in the Planning Statement produced by Maybern and this information is not repeated in this report.

It is however relevant that the land opposite (west/northwest) has been granted planning permission for 127 dwellings and site preparations are now underway. This is a clear material consideration to the context of the Site in visual and landscape terms as set out below.

5.0 Description of the Proposals

The revised proposals are for a farm shop and café selling produce from Bank Top Farm and other local producers with parking for 17 cars including three accessible spaces, and cycle and motorcycle parking. It will also incorporate a butchery for preparing the meat, a kitchen and WCs. The single storey building would be cut into the west facing slope, and this would be retained by the building and a 'green' retaining wall to the rear of the car park (the wall being lower than that previously proposed). As the building is now lower and single storey, without the upper level set back, the visual mass of the structure when seen from the north and south would be significantly reduced, along with the level of amendment to the slope form. The lower roof tilts eastwards reducing its impact from the west. Exterior lighting of the building and its surrounds would be minimal and during the hours of darkness when the shop is closed would be limited to security movement activated PIR (passive infrared lighting).

The main carparking area would be mainly a reinforced grass surface to minimise the visual effects and reduce rainwater runoff, and an outdoor terrace area for pedestrian access, landscaping, cycle parking and seating outside the café would be paved with permeable paving, again to reduce run off.

A new native hawthorn-based hedge would be planted along the road frontage to the back of the existing wall, and this would extend along the road frontage southwards to the entrance to the Farm at the southernmost point of the site, and northwards to the boundary of Bank Top Farm which coincides with a narrow belt of trees running up to the farmhouse itself. The hedge would provide some screening of the new proposals from the road and pavement, as well as contributing to the wider green infrastructure and biodiversity, linking in to existing green infrastructure elements to the north and south.

A new stock proof boundary would be installed along the edge of the farm access track to the east of the site and a native hedge would be continued along here and down the northern edge of the development area.

The grassland surrounding the new building would be resown with a locally native wildflower mix, and a small wetland flush on the slope immediately southeast of the building would be reinforced with appropriate native wetland plants such as yellow flag and cuckoo flower to improve the existing

biodiversity on the site. A new pedestrian access, incorporating a short stretch of decking, would be provided for this area.

The paved area outside the café would be enhanced with large, raised planters incorporating small trees to provide shade in summer and visual interest to users of the café and shop. A new kitchen and herb garden would be created along the western edge of the terrace, partly enclosing and providing an attractive backdrop to the sitting area.

6.0 Landscape Baseline

This section considers any landscape and heritage designations, the landscape character of the area and the landscape context of the area within which the Site exists.

6.1 Statutory Landscape Designations

- The site lies within the Green Belt.
- Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies 240 m to the west and northwest of the site.
- The South Pennine Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) are contiguous with each other and lie 1300m to the east of the Site.
- The site does lie within the Risk Zone for both SSSI areas, however as a small-scale development it would not meet the necessary criteria which requires any further action.

6.2 Conservation Areas

- There are a number of Conservation Areas around Littleborough, the two closest to the Site are Littleborough Town Centre 570 m to the north and Hollingworth Fold 470 m to the south. The settings of neither would be affected by the proposed development.

6.3 Non statutory Landscape Designations

- Hollingworth Lake is a Site of Biological Interest (SBI) and lies 400 m south of the Site.

6.4 Listed Buildings

- There are a number of Grade II listed buildings, one Grade II* listed building and structures in the vicinity, notably within Littleborough, at Rakewood to the south and within Smithy Bridge to the west, these are all at least 650 m away from the Site and the setting of none of these listed buildings or structures would be affected by the proposals.

6.5 Non-designated heritage assets

These are buildings or structures which are not listed but have been identified as being of some local importance.

- Properties 99 – 115 and the Wine Press public house on Hollingworth Road are listed as being of local interest, these are between 300 and 420 m from the site. The proposed development would not affect the setting of these buildings.

6.6 Tree Preservation Orders

There are no Tree Preservation Orders on trees in the immediate vicinity of the site.

6.7 National Landscape Character Types and Areas

Natural England has divided England into 159 distinct landscape character areas, and each has a profile which describes the natural and cultural elements which have shaped the landscape. The Site lies within National Character Area (NCA) 36 Southern Pennines, and close to NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe, which lies about 1km to the west.

National Character Areas can only give a broad-brush approach to characterising the local area and the following are particularly relevant to this Site:

NCA 36 Southern Pennines:

- *Central spine of moorland fringed by upland pastures and deeply dissected by narrow valleys.*
- *Enclosed upland pastures and hay meadows enclosed by drystone walls on the hillsides, and narrow valleys with dense gritstone settlements in the valleys, with steep slopes often densely wooded, providing strong contrast with open moorlands.*
- *Local stone buildings, with stone flags on roofs, bring a high degree of homogeneity to towns, villages, hamlets and farmsteads.*

NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe

- *Transitional zone between elevated, open moorlands and densely populated urban areas on lower ground.*
- *Field boundaries include dry 'gritstone' walls at higher elevations and hedgerows at lower elevations.*
- *Limited semi-natural habitats include broadleaved mixed and yew woodland, lowland dry acid grassland, lowland meadows, lowland heathland, and purple moor-grass and rush pasture, which are often fragmented.*
- *Historic trans-Pennine communication routes, especially railways and canals.*

6.8 Regional Landscape Character: Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment

This character and sensitivity assessment² was carried out to inform the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework and considers landscape character at a regional level for the Greater Manchester Area which includes Rochdale, and the sensitivity of different landscape characters to different types of development. The full profile for the relevant Landscape Character Types (LCTs) is given in Appendix 2.

The character assessment divides Greater Manchester into different Landscape Character Types (LCT's), which can be generic and occur in different parts of the region. These in turn are sub-divided into Landscape Character Areas (LCA's) which are geographically unique. The assessment is a broad-brush approach, only LCTs are described, LCAs are not, and the focus is on the potential impact of commercial, industrial or residential development. The development at Bank Top Farm consisting of a single building would be considered a very small-scale development in the context of this study.

Sensitivity is considered for seven different landscape character categories, each broken down into descriptive sub clauses, and two different development scenarios: 2-3 storey residential housing

² Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment LUC 2018

developments and commercial / industrial developments, and a judgement made, describing sensitivity on a five-point low to high scale. Where the sub clauses are specific to this Site, they are considered in the landscape assessment.



Typical Pennine Foothills LCT Landscape Character



Typical Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT Landscape Character

The study focuses on the description and analysis of sensitivity of the landscape character types, and where there is a significant variation, the specific landscape character area would be identified.

The Site lies near to the boundary of two Landscape Character Types, it is located within LCT Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes (West/South Pennines) and LCT Pennine Foothills (West/South Pennines) lies immediately to the west, so there is some overlap in character between the two areas.

6.8.1 Open moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes

This LCT follows the northern and north-eastern edge of the Greater Manchester conurbation, where it abuts the edge of the South and West Pennines.

The relevant clauses from the description which are typical of the area around the Site are included below. Maps identifying the location of the LCT are included in Appendix 2.

The following clauses from the LCT description are considered relevant to this site:

Topography, geology and drainage

- *Generally, soil fertility is poor; the majority of agricultural land is classed as Grade 4 or 5.*

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.*
- *Reservoirs also form valued recreational destinations with visitor facilities, including Watergrove Reservoir and Ogden Reservoir.*

Archaeology and cultural heritage

- *The enclosed landscape contains a number of historic settlements, many of which are designated as Conservation Areas with clusters of Listed Buildings, including prominent churches.*
- *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

- *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.*
- *Occasional halls, manors and country residences are also scattered throughout the landscape, including Smithills Hall (Grade I Listed) in Bolton District and Shore Hall (Grade II* Listed) in Rochdale District.*
- *Relatively sparse road network, with farms and settlements linked by minor roads and tracks. Some larger routes cross the landscape, including the M62 and numerous A-roads.*
- *Forms an attractive, undeveloped remote backdrop to and has a strong visual relationship with nearby urban areas.*

Views and perceptual qualities

- *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.*

The LCT is subdivided into five landscape character areas, (LCAs), Rough Hill – Brun Moor LCA 29 is the largest and extends around the north and east side of Littleborough, to the edge of the Greater Manchester boundary. See map in Appendix 2.

The Greater Manchester Assessment judges the sensitivity of the LCA to be Medium High for 2- 3 storey housing development and High for larger scale commercial development, this small-scale development would be below the threshold in terms of scale as defined in the Greater Manchester Assessment.

6.8.2 Pennine Foothills (West /South Pennines)

The following clauses from the LCT description are considered relevant or partly relevant to this site:

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.*

Land use and field patterns

- *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

- *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

- *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 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.*

Views and perceptual qualities

- *Variable visual character depending on topography and vegetation cover.*
- *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.*

This LCT is divided into five LCAs. The site lies just to the east of LCA 28 Rochdale and Oldham south Pennine Foothills which shadows much of the south and west edges of Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT. Maps showing the location are included in Appendix 2.

The Greater Manchester Assessment judges the landscape sensitivity for larger scale developments and assesses it to be Medium for 2-3 storey housing, and Medium High for larger scale commercial development. This small-scale development would be below the threshold in terms of scale as defined in the Greater Manchester Assessment.

6.9 Review of existing landscape character assessments

Landscape character assessments may differ from the actual landscape on site, as such studies can only achieve a certain level of detail, and landscapes change and evolve over time, so it is good practice

in an LVA to review any landscape character assessments used and identify any significant differences or relevant similarities.

6.9.1 Review of National Character Profiles

The Site is on the very edge of the South Pennines NCA, so some elements of the character profile are less prominent here, views are locally contained in the immediate vicinity of the site and the large-scale sweeping landscape is not apparent until a few 100 metres from the site when this becomes apparent from elevated positions such as from footpath 2 (see Figure 3) looking northwards. There is some homogeneity in local buildings, built from stone, with stone flagged roofs, but also newer post-war development which may be brick or render and suburban in character in the immediate locality, notably along Hollingworth Road immediately south of the Site. The new residential development and its' associated boundary treatments being carried out on the land opposite this Site will add to the feeling of suburbanisation. The development immediately along the Hollingworth Road frontage will be in the immediate site context of the proposed farm shop and a clear new influence on the character of the immediate area.

Whilst the Site shares characteristics with the Manchester Pennine Fringe NCA that lies immediately to the west, which is described as a transitional landscape lying between elevated open moorlands and the more densely populated lower areas, here the Site would be set in the context and influence of the urban areas of Littleborough and Smithy Bridge which both contain large areas of post-war housing. Hedges are noted as field boundaries in this NCA at lower levels, though these are recently more widespread in the South Pennines NCA too, as landowners have seen the advantages of planting hedge boundaries.

6.9.2 Review of Regional Landscape Character Profiles

The Site lies within the Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT. However the landscape character of site location and immediate setting is significantly different to many of the main elements of the profile. This LCT is not associated with a sense of remoteness and isolation, and the sense of openness would not be associated with long panoramic views in this location, rather some sense of being on the edge of open country, with a close association to the suburban edge of Littleborough and Smithy Bridge. This will become more compelling as the new development on the Akzo site is completed. The Site does not have a strongly rural character, as described in the perceptual qualities of the Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT, it is partly rural. Nearby suburban elements such as post-war housing at Smithy Bridge and ribbon development further south on Hollingworth Road is prominent, the road infrastructure, including street lighting and activity is strong and the new residential development opposite the Site on Hollingworth Road has commenced. This would change the context of this section of Hollingworth Road, which presently has some rural character, to partly suburban in character. There are also views into the built-up area of Littleborough to the north.

The description of the adjacent LCT Pennine Foothills, is partly accurate in respect of some of the area west of the site though it doesn't mention the prominent wind turbines on the northern and north-western skyline which have been present since 2015 and earlier, and it understates the extent of post war housing and sizeable areas of industrial and commercial buildings around Littleborough and Smithy Bridge. Commercial and industrial development is not addressed to any extent in either LCT apart from the acknowledgement that there are '*views of urban development, and urban development often in close proximity.*'

Neither LCT address the presence of brownfield sites, such as the former Akzo Nobel site on the opposite side of Hollingworth Road which affects the immediate landscape character, and in particular the poor quality of some of the boundary treatments to the west side of Hollingworth Road. This Site

is now under construction for the development of 126 new homes and the poor road boundary will be replaced by new detached homes fronting onto Hollingworth Road and would be associated with some new tree planting and a low stone boundary wall³, forming a new suburban boundary.

6.10 Site Description and Context

This is now a small-scale development on a modest triangular site comprising 0.38 Ha on land which is part of Bank Top Farm Littleborough. See figure 2 below. The Site lies immediately adjacent to Hollingworth Road, B6225 roughly midway along the stretch which runs southwards from Littleborough to Hollingworth Lake. The road has pavements to either side and a low stone wall and post and wire stock proof fence separates the Site from the pavement along the eastern side of the road. Hollingworth Road is a busy route for local traffic, with street lighting, a bus stop is located near the proposed entrance to the farm shop.

The topography is steep, facing due west and in places uneven rising up to Cleggswood Hill to the east. The vehicular access to the farm rakes diagonally across the hillside immediately above the Site and forms the eastern boundary. The current land use is sheep and cattle pasture, the grazing is poor and in places rushy. Immediately to the south of the site is a group of mature sycamores which partially contain views south-eastwards. Around 180 m to the north is a strong belt of mostly sycamore trees running along the line of an historic track from Hollingworth Road up to Bank Top Farm.

On the opposite side of the road to the site a tall overgrown hedge extends from immediately opposite the entrance track northwards to a point 60 m north of the Site edge. There is a patchwork of different fencing materials timber rail, plastic coated mesh and redundant concrete post and rail, in places the boundaries are dilapidated.

Views are highly contained to and from the east by the steep landform and open up locally as far as the eastern edge of Smithy Bridge to the west and are channelled along the road to the north and south by the landform and existing vegetation. To the north there are long views to the wind turbine site on Crook Hill.

³ Proposed Site Layout Watson Batty Architects Drawing P15



Looking down on the site from the farm access track on eastern boundary

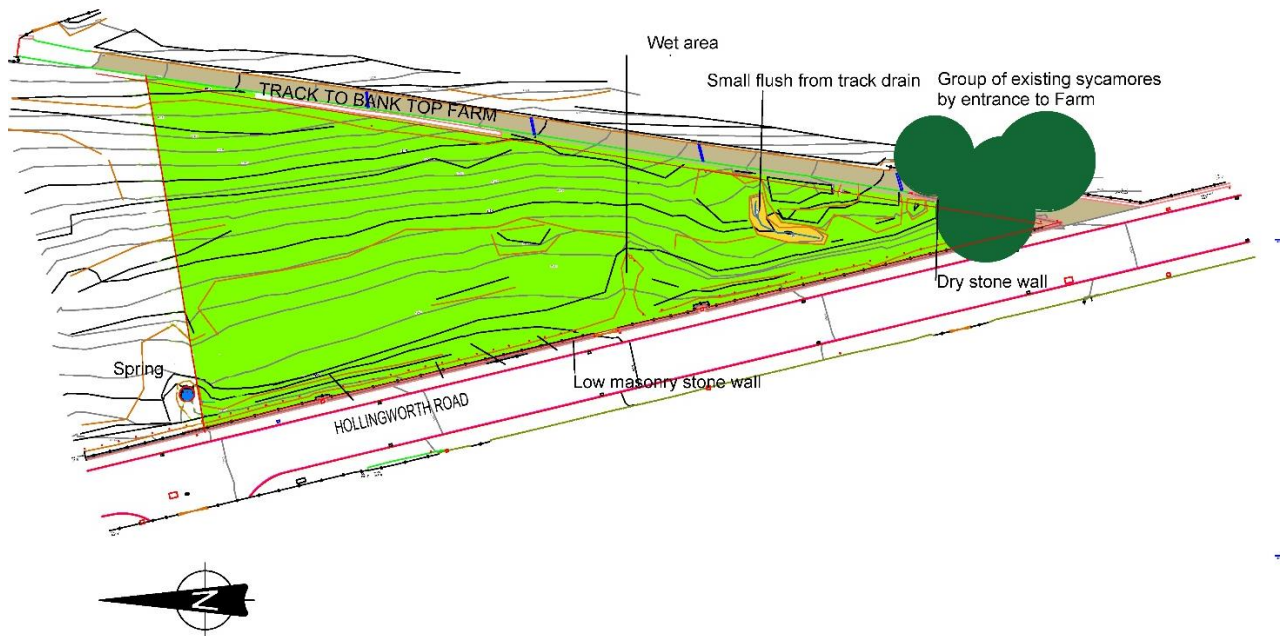


Figure 2 Existing Features Plan

6.11 Site Character – relative to landscape character designations

The site shares characteristics typical of both Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes, and Pennine Foothills LCTs. It is a landscape which has been created by glaciation, underlain by the Pennine Coal Measures and overlain by glacial till, giving poor infertile soils. These areas are characterised by a patchwork of small irregular and medium sized rectilinear enclosures, with small scale features such as stone walls and groups of trees, which are conspicuous landmarks. The land use is primarily semi-improved pasture used for sheep and cattle grazing, with hawthorn hedges along some boundaries. Field origins include regularly shaped parliamentary enclosures and smaller scale 18th and 19th C enclosures. There is an unusual pattern to the enclosure of land on the fields above the site on Cleggswood Hill, where one corner of almost square fields has a small triangular stone wall enclosure planted with one or more mature trees (generally sycamore). A similar pattern dating from around 1840 occurs on fields at Erringden above Hebden Bridge, where the trees were probable planted for sheltering stock and perhaps fuel.

Locally historic settlements share a simple vernacular style and these scattered farms and houses are often built of millstone grit. Victorian stone and brick terraces also form limited ribbon development along Hollingworth Road, with more modern post-war brick and render bungalows. The new residential development that has recently commenced immediately opposite the Site which will comprise 126 brick built homes, will further reinforce the suburban character.

Activity and infrastructure are also part of the character with pylons, masts and wind turbines common features on the skyline, and tranquillity is impaired by the traffic on the busy Hollingworth Road and the background hum from the M62. The new residential development will increase the sense of busyness on and along the main road and in the immediate vicinity of the proposed farm shop site.

Numerous footpaths link adjacent urban areas to open countryside and eventually the moorlands above.

7.0 Visual Baseline

7.1 Zone of visual influence

This Site is not visible over a wide area and the zone of visual influence is correspondingly small.

The Site is most visible from Hollingworth Road and the footpath either side of it, the closest path runs immediately adjacent to the western edge of the site, there is also some visibility from public rights of way to the west of the Site, and from some properties on the east side of Smithy Bridge.

As the building will not now be open into the evenings, it is considered that there will be no darkness nighttime visibility (as there will be no internal/window lighting post shop closing time.) Nighttime lighting would be for security alone, very infrequent and minimal.

The local topography which rises steeply behind the Site to the east and gently to the west contains views, which are largely channelled along the road.

The zone of visual influence would be no more than 500 m in radius, and these with the exception of two viewpoints to the north and south of the Site, are to the west of the Site.

7.2 Public Access on and adjacent to the site

There is no public access into the site at present. There are two footpaths which run west from Hollingworth Road towards Smithy Bridge, one opposite the southern tip of the Site, and a third which

runs northwest to southeast between Smithy Bridge and the Rochdale Canal from where there would be occasional views eastwards towards the site. See Figure 3 below. There are no views of the site from either the Rochdale Way or the Weavers Way which run around the edge of Hollingworth Lake, and up the southeast side of Cleggswood Hill. The site is not visible from the paths around Hollingworth Lake or the country park.



Figure 3 Footpaths described in the appraisal

8.0 The Assessment of Landscape Effects

8.1 Landscape effects

The landscape effects are the effects on the landscape as a resource. Having obtained the baseline information, and an understanding of the landscape receptors, the landscape effects are described and predicted by identifying how the proposed development will interact with the landscape receptors, how susceptible these are to change and where appropriate whether this might be positive or negative. For example:

- How will noise levels and the sense of tranquillity be affected?
- Will the sense of openness be affected?
- Are there opportunities to remove eyesores?
- Will the Landscape Character be affected?
- What is the density of development and building types locally;
- What are the patterns of land use, including historic uses;

The description of the landscape effects for this appraisal also considers:

- **Indirect effects:** e.g. infrastructure, access roads;
- **Secondary effects:** e.g. where management changes and vegetation cover or hydrology might change;
- **Positive effects:** e.g. opportunity to improve biodiversity

Field work observations are carried out and retained for future reference.

8.2 Construction Phase

It is considered that the construction phase for this project would be short so this stage has not been assessed.

8.3 Landscape Value

This is the relative value given to different landscapes by society. Landscapes may be designated at an international, national, local or community level. This study is primarily concerned with landscapes of regional, community, and local importance.

The aspects of the landscape that might be affected by the proposed development are identified from the existing character assessments at all levels. The characteristics, sensitivities, and guidelines in the character assessments are taken account of as indicators of the aspects of the landscape important to character and evaluated. Where landscape effects can be mitigated against, these are described:

Local – Locally or regionally designated landscapes (e.g. Area of High Landscape Value, Regional Scenic Areas, National Trust properties, Sites of Biological Interest, Conservation Areas); and areas which local evidence indicates as being more valued than the surrounding area.

Community – ‘everyday’ landscape which is appreciated by the local community but has little or no wider recognition of its value.

Limited – despoiled or degraded landscape with little or no evidence of being valued by the community, or areas with very limited public access and no features of significance.

For local and community landscapes, there will need to be a greater emphasis on the consideration of Landscape Character Types and to what extent the area being considered conforms to that type. Individual landscape features, e.g. particularly good quality stone walls or hedges, can be considered in their own right, but also in the way they contribute to the wider pattern of the landscape.

SENSITIVITY		SUSCEPTIBILITY		
		High	Medium	Low
VALUE	National/International	High	High-Moderate	Moderate
	Local/District	High-Moderate	Moderate	Moderate-Low
	Community	Moderate	Moderate- Low	Low
	Limited	Low	Low-Negligible	Negligible

The table above illustrates how value is assessed and then combined with the receptors’ level of susceptibility to give an indication of sensitivity.

8.4 Magnitude of Landscape Effects

For the purposes of this study the magnitude of the landscape effects will relate to the size and scale of the changes in the landscape that is likely to be experienced as a result of each effect. The geographical extent of landscape changes is at the level of the immediate setting of the Site. It is assumed that this shop and café development will be permanent and irreversible.

LANDSCAPE EFFECT		MAGNITUDE			
		Negligible	Small	Medium	Large
SENSITIVITY OF RECEPTOR	Negligible	Negligible impact	Negligible – Slight impact	Slight impact	Slight – Moderate impact
	Low - Negligible	Negligible – Slight impact	Negligible – Slight impact	Slight impact	Slight – Moderate impact
	Low	Negligible – slight impact	Slight impact	Slight– Moderate impact	Moderate impact
	Moderate - Low	Slight impact	Slight impact	Slight – Moderate impact	Moderate impact
	Moderate	Slight impact	Slight - Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Moderate - Substantial impact
	High - Moderate	Slight impact	Slight - Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Moderate - Substantial impact
	High	Slight – Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Moderate - Substantial impact	Substantial impact

The table above shows how the sensitivity of the receptor is combined with the magnitude of the effect to give the overall impact.

8.5 Landscape Receptors

The baseline information has identified the landscape receptors, these are the components of the landscape which would be affected by the proposals, they include:

- Landscape Character Areas, national and local
- Existing site features and elements: landform, pasture, trees, boundaries
- Sense of openness

8.6 Description of Landscape Effects on Receptors

Changes that have arisen since the previous iteration of this appraisal have been highlighted in green in text boxes.

8.6.1 Wider Landscape Character Area

NCA 36 Southern Pennines gives a reasonable overview of this transitional site on the edge of the South Pennines, reflecting the diverse upland landscape, the often steep, poor pastures fringing the moorlands, and the typical gritstone communities, small settlements and scattered farms such as Bank Top Farm.

NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe reflects the transitional nature of the Site, and its proximity to dense urban settlement despite its rural character.

The scale and character of the proposals are sensitive to the typical characteristics of each NCA and would not affect either.

8.6.2 Local Landscape Character Type

The landscape in the immediate vicinity of the site shares some characteristics with the Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes, and Pennine Foothills LCTs.

Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT

This LCT is described as having strongly rural character however in para 6.9.2 I state why I consider this would be an overemphasis in this location, because of the presence of suburban elements that dilute that rural character. The proposed development would have some effect on the partly rural character and the sense of openness which is considered more fully in para 8.6.3 below.

In this appraisal sensitivity is arrived at by combining the value of a landscape and its susceptibility to change.

The value of this landscape is judged to be Limited-Community, that is it is an unremarkable landscape but it has some value locally, representing to the east, the edge of the typical upland landscape of the South Pennines. Though there are places nearby of local importance, i.e. Hollingworth Lake Country Park, this is balanced out by the Site's proximity to the built up areas of Littleborough and Smithy Bridge and the busy, street lit Hollingworth Road. In the immediate vicinity north of the Site the former Akzo Nobel plant is now being developed for housing that will result in a considerable change to the immediate character of the Site and the road frontage. The new housing will front onto the west side of Hollingworth Road and extend back from the road a substantial distance, along the south side of the canal. Activity from the site and increased traffic, pedestrian movement and lighting would also result in a change to the visual context and character of the area.

The development of a farm shop would mean some loss of partly rural character along a section of Hollingworth Road that is now changing, and the steeply sloping landform would be locally reconfigured to accommodate the building and car park requiring a new retaining wall just over 3 m in height; this is a 1 m reduction from the previous proposal, and the wall would be not much higher than the vehicles utilising the car park area. This would also be off-set by the opportunity to improve biodiversity by installing new hedgerows, which would provide good links to existing green infrastructure, and introducing new wildflower meadows and wetland planting. The single storey building, and car park has been designed to minimise its impact on the surroundings, the reduced scale and revised materials arrangement of the building reflect those of agricultural buildings in the immediate area, so this structure will not be as prominent as the previous proposal. The retaining wall would be designed as a green wall using native climbing and trailing species and a large part of the car park would be paved with a reinforced grass surface. The near roadside location of the building also reads logically in the landscape, where there is other roadside residential development to the north and south of the site, and as approved on the site opposite.

The susceptibility of the Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes to the development is considered to be **Low** because although this type of development is not typical of the Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT, the context of the development has now become partly suburban with the development of the Akzo Nobel site. Combining the value and the susceptibility gives a sensitivity of **Low - Negligible**.

The magnitude of the effect is considered to be **Small**, the proposed development is small in scale, the geographic extent is at site level, it does not extend beyond the site itself. The proposals would be permanent and irreversible. The changes in the landscape, such as cutting into the slope to create the car park and building platform would work with the existing contours and minimise overall disturbance. The effects would be felt over a limited locality. The proposed improvements to

biodiversity, such as hedge planting would extend over a slightly larger area than the development area, but at a wider landscape scale, these would be small in scale, having an impact on the immediate locality.

Combining the magnitude and the sensitivity gives an overall **Negligible-Slight** impact, this would be **Adverse** as the development would be a new building on the edge of countryside, although supported by a comprehensive landscape scheme offering a range of enhancements.

The Pennine Foothills LCT

This LCT encompasses the area to the west of the Site, though several characteristics are shared with the Site. This LCT is described as a *strongly rural working landscape*, although close to settlement *there are often urban fringe influences*. The landscape in the immediate vicinity of the site is not 'strongly rural' for the reasons described above, there are urban fringe influences, such as the new residential development and boundary treatments along the west side of Hollingworth Road, associated with the former Akzo site.

The value of the LCT is considered to be **Community**, there are a number of reasonably well used footpaths which locally cross the LCT, and many of these enjoy long views into the adjacent uplands as well as into the more urban areas to the north and west. The susceptibility of this LCT to change as a result of the proposals is considered to be **Low**, as modern as well as traditional settlement is typical of this LCT, and this type of small development would not be out of character. The sensitivity is judged to be **Low**. The magnitude of the effect is **Small** as the development is small scale and just outside the designated zone of this LCT.

This gives an overall **Slight** impact which would be **Adverse** at introducing new development into a rural area.

8.6.3 The sense of openness

The sense of openness is described as a key characteristic of the Open Moorland and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT, where it is also closely associated with remoteness and isolation, neither of which are applicable to this Site or its immediate context. This is different from 'openness' used as a planning term. The sense of openness in a landscape context is usually associated with the ability to see long panoramic views, and experience wide open spaces and this sense is clearly meant in the LCT description, it can also mean the sense of being in the open countryside, with immediate views unimpaired by built development. The sense of openness would be experienced by pedestrians and vehicle users travelling along Hollingworth Road, and to a much lesser extent to users of the footpaths to the west of the site. There would be little loss of sense of openness associated with the Site. The area is visually contained by the steep ground rising to the east behind the proposed development, and the new development would be well below the skyline which rises steeply eastwards behind it, the development would not impinge on the views channelled along Hollingworth Road from either the north or south. Proposed hedges to the western boundary of the new site would providing a green buffer between the carpark, building and terrace and the road and footpath to the west.

The value of the sense of openness at the Site is **Limited** as at this point it is not a feature of this landscape. The susceptibility of the sense of openness to change is considered to be **Low**, and this gives a sensitivity of **Negligible**.

The magnitude of the effect would extend for a distance of around 350 m, at the furthest point from the Site it would barely be discernible, and for a distance of around 90 m opposite the site, it would be clearly perceptible. The geographic extent over which the loss of any sense of openness is felt

would be at the immediate setting of the site, i.e. within the limits described above, the effect would be long term and irreversible. The magnitude of the effect would be judged to be **Medium**.

This would combine with the sensitivity to give a **Slight Adverse** impact.

8.6.4 Existing Site Features

Existing trees:

The group of mature sycamore at the entrance to Bank Top Farm at the southernmost point of the Site are an important feature in the immediate landscape and are viewed silhouetted on the hillside from the north and south. The trees would be unaffected by the proposals.

Landform:

The steep and uneven grassy bank rising up from the eastern edge of Hollingworth Road to the access track, would be affected by the proposals. The value of the slope is considered to be **Community** the steep slopes are a typical feature of the LCT. The susceptibility of the slope to change is **High**, as its character and appearance would be changed in the immediate vicinity of the development to accommodate the building, a new retaining wall and the car park and localised regrading would smooth out some of the roughness, new planting would also change the appearance of parts of the slope. The sensitivity would therefore be judged as **Moderate – Low**.

The slope would be affected over a geographically small area, extending for 52 m within the bounds of the Site, and reduced from the previous proposal as the now omitted second floor area was set back further and higher into the slope, these changes would be permanent and irreversible, the scale of the engineering would be moderate requiring total cut of at least 3 m to create the building footprint, the magnitude of the effect is judged to be **Medium**.

Combining the magnitude and the sensitivity gives an overall **Slight – Moderate Adverse** impact as some of the irregularities which give the landform its character would be lost.

Pasture:

The Site is currently poor quality pasture, grazed by sheep and sometimes cattle, with localised areas of rushy damp ground on the lower areas and a small wet flush near the entrance track towards the southern end of the site. The biodiversity of the Site is currently poor, with a range of grasses typical of acid grassland but limited herbaceous plants. The proposals would re-sow areas disturbed by the proposals and develop a more diverse wildflower meadow within an enclosed area extending eastwards to the track and northwards to a re-instated boundary, surrounding the proposed building. Species typical of acid grassland such as sneezewort, sheep-sorrel and buttercup would be introduced. The existing wetland area would be enhanced to incorporate native damp loving plants such as yellow flag, cuckoo flower and marsh marigold. The biodiversity of the site and the visual appearance of the pastoral area would be significantly enhanced by the proposals. The value of the meadow is **Limited** in landscape terms as it is floristically poor, the susceptibility of the pasture to change is **Medium**, since an area of pasture would be lost entirely to the development, and the remaining areas would be changed and enhanced by the proposals, the sensitivity is judged to be **Low – Negligible**.

The geographic extent of the effect would be at Site level, the effects would be long term subject to appropriate management, the magnitude of the effect is judged to be **Medium**, as there would be a noticeable improvement in terms of amenity value and biodiversity. The Impact is judged to be **Slight and Positive**.

Boundaries:

A low stone wall, around 800 mm high runs along the entire Hollingworth Road frontage of the Site and continues in a similar style for the whole length of Hollingworth Road north and south of the Site until it reaches residential property boundaries. This is a partly mortared and partly drystone wall with a flat slab coping, it is in moderate condition with sections of coping missing and a short section of around 10 – 15 metres has fallen down and has been patched with a timber fence. A second traditional drystone wall runs a short way up the east edge of the site from the entrance for about 23 m.

A short section of wall of around 10 m would be lost to create a vehicular entrance as part of the proposals, a second pedestrian access utilises an existing gateway.

The value of the wall is **Community**, it forms a clear boundary to the edge of the pasture, the materials are in keeping with the Open Moorlands LCT, although the design with a flat top and being part masonry is a little more urban than a traditional drystone wall. The susceptibility of the wall is **Low** since only a short section would be removed. This gives a sensitivity of **Low**.

The geographic extent of the effect would be at Site level, and any changes would be permanent and irreversible. The magnitude of the effect would be **Small** as the proposed changes are limited in scale. The overall impact would be **Slight** and **Neutral** as a small section of wall would be lost, but the whole section would be repaired and damaged sections made good.

8.6.4 Summary Table: Landscape Effects

RECEPTOR	SUSCEPTIBILITY	VALUE	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE	OVERALL IMPACT PREVIOUS SCHEME	OVERALL IMPACT SINGLE STOREY SCHEME
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER AND DESIGNATIONS						
NCA 36 Southern Pennines					No effect	No effect
NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe					No effect	No effect
Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT	Low	Limited - Community	Low	Small	Slight Adverse	Negligible-Slight Adverse
Pennine Foothills LCT	Low	Community	Low	Small	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse
Sense of openness	Low	Limited	Negligible	Medium	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse
Site features: Trees					No effect	No effect
Site features: Landform	High	Community	Moderate - Low	Medium	Slight Moderate Adverse	Slight Moderate Adverse
Site features: Pasture	Medium	Limited	Low - Negligible	Medium	Slight Positive	Slight Positive
Site features: Boundaries	Low	Community	Low	Small	Slight Adverse	Slight Neutral

9.0 The Assessment of Visual effects

The assessment of the visual effects considers the significance of the effect by evaluating the susceptibility of each receptor, i.e. the person experiencing the view, the value of the view and the magnitude of the change in the view that will be experienced by each. These are then brought together to describe the degree of impact, and record whether it is beneficial or adverse.

9.1 Visual Receptors

The following visual receptors are considered in this study:

- Users of public rights of way
- Pedestrian and vehicle users on Hollingworth Road
- Residents within 1000 m

9.2 Susceptibility

The susceptibility of the receptors is assessed as:

- **High:** where the landscape and a particular view is an important part of a receptors' focus.
- **Medium:** where the landscape is of some interest but is not of overriding importance to the receptor.
- **Low:** where the receptors' enjoyment or use of a landscape does not depend on appreciation of views of the landscape.

9.3 Value of Views

Where views are widely recognised, because of their cultural associations for example or because there are viewing points associated with them, these are recorded and indicate that these are of particular importance. Views are described in terms of the landscape character and the elements making up the view and whether these detract or add to the view. The value may be defined as High, Medium or Low.

9.4 Sensitivity:

Sensitivity is established by combining the susceptibility and value assessments as shown in the table below:

SENSITIVITY		VALUE OF VIEWS		
		Low	Medium	High
SUSCEPTIBILITY OF RECEPTORS	Low	Low	Moderate-Low	Moderate
	Medium	Moderate-Low	Moderate	High-Moderate
	High	Moderate	High-Moderate	High

9.5 Magnitude:

The nature of the effect likely to occur (magnitude) is described in the following table:

MAGNITUDE	
Where the proposals would form a dominant and unavoidable part of the scene, very significantly affecting the impression of the view	Very large
Where the proposals would form a prominent and immediately apparent element of the scene and would affect the overall impression of the view.	Large
Where proposals would form a visible and recognisable new development but where it is not intrusive within the overall view.	Moderate
Where proposals constitute only a minor component of the wider view, which could be missed by the casual observer or where awareness does not affect the overall quality of the scene	Small

Where the change is so small that any change is barely perceptible within the viewed landscape	Negligible
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The sensitivity and the magnitude are combined to give an overall degree of impact as shown in the table below:

VISUAL EFFECT		MAGNITUDE				
		Negligible	Small	Moderate	Large	
SENSITIVITY	Low	Minimal impact	Slight impact	Slight – Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Moderate – impact
	Moderate	Slight impact	Slight - Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Moderate - impact	Moderate - Substantial impact
	High	Slight impact	Slight - Moderate impact	Moderate impact	Moderate - Substantial impact	Substantial impact

9.6 Factors Affecting Visibility of the Site

The steep topography to the east of the Site means that it is not visible from the east and southeast. From the west there are several footpaths that run east west across the meadows below Cleggswood Farm, and then continue up westwards to Smithy Bridge, there are some filtered glimpses of the Site from these footpaths. The main views of the Site are channelled along Hollingworth Road, with the steep ground containing views to the east and the large overgrown hedge to the west edge of Hollingworth Road restricting views to the west. To the south of the Site, the views are from Hollingworth Road, and the group of mature sycamore at the southern end of the site form a partial screen, the site becomes less visible as the road rises towards Hollingworth Lake, beyond 130 m south of the site it would be indiscernible. To the north, the road drops towards Littleborough, and swings northwards so beyond 230 m north of the site it would no longer be visible.

Photovoltaic solar panels may be proposed to the roof of the building, which would be orientated to the south. If such panels are to be considered in later detailed design phases of the proposal (post planning permission) this would be addressed in a revision to the LVA.

The visual assessment has been carried out during winter when visibility will be greatest, this will reduce in summer as foliage will provide additional screening particularly in views from the west.

Viewpoints have been selected to show how visible the Site would be from various publicly accessible points in the vicinity. The photographs are shown in Appendix 1 and each viewpoint is shown on Figure 4 below.

9.7 Visual Context

There are many well walked footpaths in the area, with three public car parks and a visitor centre used by walkers within 900 m of the Site. In the immediate locality views northwards and eastwards are towards the South Pennine uplands, while views westwards are towards the built-up areas of Littleborough and the edge of Smithy Bridge. Hollingworth Lake is an important draw for visitors due south of the site, but there are no direct views of the site from Hollingworth Lake.

In all views the site is in the context of the road corridor with infrastructure and traffic movements. From the west, views will now be in the context of the housing development site and thereafter a large residential area with associated activity, lighting and movements.

9.8 Description of Visual Effects on Receptors

Changes that have arisen since the previous iteration of this appraisal have been highlighted in green in text boxes.

9.8.1 Users of footpaths

Public rights of ways that are likely to have views over the site have been assessed, these are noted even when there are no views of the Site, to demonstrate the limit to the visual envelope. Footpaths are shown on Figure 3, and they are given a number which corresponds with the description given in the text. All users of public footpaths are considered to have High susceptibility as this is an area important for recreation and local tourism. It is believed that all the paths considered are reasonably well used. Any development within areas of open countryside is generally considered adverse from the walker's perspective.



Figure 4 Viewpoint locations

Footpath 1: Smithy Bridge to Hollingworth Road - Viewpoint 1, Viewpoint 2

This path follows a route eastward from Smithy Bridge doglegging southwards via Lower Cleggswood Farm and then heading east again to Hollingworth Road, emerging onto the road at a point around 65 metres south of the entrance to Bank Top Farm.

The Site would be apparent in the middle distance from the path above Lower Cleggswood Farm for a distance of around 100 m, Viewpoint 1. From Lower Cleggswood Farm eastwards, the existing vegetation screens the Site from the west and the tall roadside vegetation means that the Site would be indiscernible until Hollingworth Road is reached.

Viewpoint 1 looks due east with a panorama of the South Pennines from Blackstone Edge to the south towards the Walsden Valley to the north, Holy Trinity Church Littleborough is in the middle distance. The residential development site on the former Akzo Site will be clearly visible along the edge of Hollingworth Road to the immediate north of the site. This view has many typical elements of the

South Pennines NCA, and the Open Moorland and Enclosed Upland Fringes LCT demonstrating the range of landscape character, from the open moorlands on the horizon, gritstone settlement in the valley bottom and sheep grazed stone wall enclosed fields and scattered farms, and modern development in the middle distance and foreground.

At Viewpoint 1, the existing roadside vegetation would provide some screening in winter and more in summer, the edge of the roof and a small section of the uppermost part of the front facade of the proposed building would be visible above the trees, but the carparking and lower section of the building would not be visible.

The value of the view would be **Medium**, there are other locations on the east side of Smithy Bridge where a similar open panorama can be appreciated, and there are some detracting elements, derelict stone walls and pony tape in the foreground and powerlines on the distant horizon, and the new residential development on the former Akzo site which will introduce suburban characteristics. The susceptibility of the receptors would be **High** as enjoyment of the view would be an important objective, this would give a sensitivity of **Moderate – High**.

The magnitude of the effect would be **Small** as the roof would be just visible and the proposals would constitute only a minor component of the wider view, and the awareness would not affect the overall quality of the scene. The visual effect would be less in summer when the roadside vegetation provides more effective screening. This gives an overall impact of **Slight-Moderate Adverse**.

The visual impact of the revised scheme with a single storey building will be less than the previously assessed two storey building from viewpoint 1.

Viewpoint 2 is from the lower section of footpath 1 east of Lower Cleggswood Farm. The view looks towards Hollingworth Road which is visible in the middle distance. The dense roadside vegetation screens the site, and **there would be no views of the building and none of the carparking from this point**. There are no other points on the lower section of footpath 1 east of Cleggswood Farm where the proposed building would be visible.

This is a change to the previously assessed proposal and there is now no landscape impact from this view point.

Footpath 2 Smithy Bridge - Hollingworth Road via edge of former Akzo Nobel site: Viewpoint 3 and 4

Footpath 2 runs due east from Smithy Bridge across open fields to a junction with footpath 3 and from here follows the boundary of the former Akzo Nobel plant eastwards before doglegging southwards, at a point almost opposite the site, it then turns east again to meet Hollingworth Road opposite the site.

From Viewpoint 3, west of the junction between footpaths 2 and 3, there are open and panoramic vistas looking north and east to Blackstone Edge and up the Walsden Valley in the background, with the farm building complex of Bank Top Farm and Hollingworth Road visible in the middle distance. The new residential development of 126 homes on the Akzo site has just commenced on site in the centre of the image and will now dominate views from this direction. The existing overgrown hedge along the western edge of Hollingworth Road provides an effective screen to the site of the farm shop particularly in summer.

The revised proposed farm shop will sit low in the landscape tucked into the bank behind the screen of hedgerow trees, in summer there would be glimpsed views of part of the roof and upper most part of the front façade of the farm shop from this location, the carpark would not be visible, and in winter there would be limited filtered views through the existing screen, so the shop and carpark could be discerned but wouldn't be conspicuous.

Views of the current development site are strong detracting elements in the foreground and will be so for the construction period. When complete the new housing will remain the dominant element, entirely changing the context of the view.

The concrete post and mesh fence will be replaced with a 1800 mm high timber boundary fence¹ to the rear of the properties abutting the footpath on the far left of the image, creating a strong suburban edge.

The value of the view is **Low – Medium** because the detracting elements are a distraction and better views with fewer detractors are possible locally. The susceptibility of the receptors is **High**, as they are walkers, and enjoyment of the views is an important objective. This gives a sensitivity of **Moderate**. The magnitude of the effect is considered to be **Small** as in winter, the filtered views of the proposed building and carpark would form a visible and recognisable new development but where it is not intrusive in the overall view. Combining the sensitivity and the magnitude would give an overall impact of **Slight - Moderate Adverse** as the proposals would represent a new built feature within a partly rural landscape.

This is a reduction in the effects previously considered.

Viewpoint 4 is approximately 100m east of the Site. Two images are presented for Viewpoint 4, the original image taken in March 2022, shows the view before development works commenced on the Akzo site, and it is presumed on completion of the development views across this site would revert to something like that, albeit there is potential for public access (although I have found nothing within the approved plans to confirm this). The BNG Assessment⁴ states *Marshy neutral grassland, woodland and the angling pond within the south-east of the site will be retained in their current form*. The second image taken in August 2023 shows temporary stockpiles, which almost totally screen out views of the farm shop site. Since the recent image contains features that are of an

⁴ Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Evance

assumed temporary nature, it is considered more appropriate to consider the original image in this LVA.

In winter the proposed building and carpark and Hollingworth Road would be discernible as filtered views through the existing vegetation, in summer, foliage would limit most of the views to the Site. Views eastwards would be over previously marshy ground assumed to be reinstated as open space and grassland. The value of the view is **Low** due to the unremarkable nature of the open space. The susceptibility of the receptors is **High** and this gives a sensitivity of **Moderate**.

The magnitude of the effect is **Small** as the proposals would be glimpsed through vegetation and are a minor component in the view which could be missed by the casual observer. This would give an overall impact of **Slight – Moderate Adverse**, as although the views are low quality, the proposals would be introducing an urban element into a partly rural scene.

Footpath 3, Heald Lane, Lake Bank – Rochdale Canal: Viewpoint 5

Footpath 3 runs northeast from Lake Bank towards Littleborough, via Lower Cleggswood Farm. Viewpoint 5 is located around 100m south of Lower Cleggswood Farm and looks northeast towards the Site. The South Pennine hills of Great Hill and Crook Hill lie on the horizon with large industrial units in Littleborough clearly visible in the middle distance, and Hollingworth Road just visible in the centre of the image. **The building and associated carparking would be entirely screened by existing vegetation from this viewpoint.**

This is a reduction in the effects previously considered.

9.8.2 Pedestrians and Vehicle Users on Hollingworth Road

Hollingworth Road Viewpoints 6, 7 and 8

Hollingworth Road runs just less than a mile, 1400 m from Littleborough to Hollingworth Lake. Three viewpoints have been selected, Viewpoints 6 and 8 are from the points furthest north and south respectively from where the proposed development would be seen, while Viewpoint 7 is from opposite the Site.

Viewpoint 6 is from a point on the footpath on the east side of Hollingworth Road approximately 230 m north of the proposed building. A small section of the profile of the tilted roof of the proposed farm shop would be just visible from this viewpoint. The value of the view is **Low** as Hollingworth Road dominates the view here, there are views into the Akzo Nobel development site and the untidy boundaries on each side of the road are detracting elements. This footpath is well used by people accessing the wider countryside and the country park who have **High** susceptibility, while vehicle users have lower susceptibility which would be judged to be **Medium**, this gives a sensitivity of **Moderate** for walkers and other users such as leisure cyclists and horse riders for whom enjoyment of the countryside is important, and **Moderate - Low** for vehicle users for whom enjoyment of the countryside is not a primary interest.

The magnitude of the effect at this point is **Small** as only a very small part of the proposals would be visible constituting a minor component in the view which could be missed by the casual observer. The overall impact would be judged to be **Slight - Moderate Adverse** for walkers and **Slight Adverse** for vehicle users as the proposals would be introducing a built element into a scene where there is none at present.

Viewpoint 7 is located opposite the Site and looks north-eastwards across the southern end of the Site at the steep hillside below Bank Top Farm. Littleborough and the turbines on the moorland above it

can be seen in the distance, views west are contained by the large overgrown hedge to the back of the road. The proposals would be clearly visible from here, the reshaped landform and the new building being prominent from this position, the carparking and the retaining wall to the back of that would be less obvious from this vantage point.

The value of the view is **Low** as it is dominated by Hollingworth Road, the susceptibility of the receptors is **High** for walkers and **Medium** for vehicle users, giving a sensitivity of **Moderate** and **Moderate-Low** for walkers and vehicle users respectively.

The magnitude of the effect would be **Large**, resulting in a **Moderate** and **Adverse** impact for both receptors, as this would be a clearly visible new development on the edge of the countryside. It should be recognised that these receptors would be users of the existing path and road therefore transient and temporary impacts.

Viewpoint 8 is located around 130m south of the Site and looks northwards towards the Site. The group of sycamore at the southern end of the Site are prominent on the flank of the hillside above the road, and Littleborough and the moorland around Great Hill and Crook Hill above is visible in the distance. It is considered that pedestrians at this viewpoint would not see the site at this point due to the steep landform screening the proposed building from view. Road users heading northwards would have a different angle of view and there would be some limited visibility of the farm shop from the road adjacent to this viewpoint.

The value of the view is judged to be **Low** as Hollingworth Road dominates the view and there are minor detracting elements such as the poorly maintained boundary wall and the wind turbines on the far horizon. The susceptibility of the receptors is **Medium** for vehicle users, giving a sensitivity of **Moderate-Low** for vehicle users. The magnitude of the effect would be **Negligible** as the proposals would scarcely be discernible. This would result in a **Slight - Minimal Adverse** impact.

9.8.3 Residents

This assessment considers the potential landscape and visual impacts of the proposed shop and café on the landscape character and users of the landscape. The users or visual receptors experience the landscape from areas that are accessible to the public. While it is recognised that residents are also visual receptors and susceptible to visual effects, they are assessed separately. This is line with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, which recognises that residential amenity assessments are separate from landscape and visual impact assessments. Although for planning consideration, occupants do not have a right to a view, mitigation may be recommended to minimise the impact on local residents where appropriate. In this report residential properties potentially affected by the proposals are identified, and the magnitude of change noted for mitigation purposes, but they are not assessed.

Any assessment given can only be an estimate as properties are not visited as part of this appraisal.

The susceptibility of residents is considered to be High, as the view may be an important consideration to residents.

The visual impact from the following properties in the immediate vicinity have been considered:

85 Hollingworth Road: this property lies 200m south of the Site, there are windows in the northern gable end and there may be just discernible views of the proposed development from those. The magnitude of the effect is considered to be nil.

Lower Cleggswood Farm, Heald Lane: the farm lies 300m southwest of the Site and there could be limited views of the upper part of the proposed building from the first floor of the farmhouse, with existing vegetation along Hollingworth Road forming a strong screen to the lower part of the proposals. The magnitude of the effect is considered to be no greater than **Small**, and during the summer months this is likely to be less.

11 Bank Close and 28 – 48 Heald Close (even numbers only) Smithy Bridge: These properties lie between 450 and 500m southwest of the Site and are at a higher elevation, it is considered that there would be views of the proposed development from the first floors of the properties and occasionally from rooms on the ground floor. The upper part of the proposed building would just be visible above existing vegetation which would screen the lower part of the building and the carpark. The magnitude of the effect would be **Negligible**.

9.8.4 Summary Table: Visual Effects

RECEPTOR	SUSCEPTIBILITY	VALUE	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE	OVERALL IMPACT PREVIOUS SCHEME	OVERALL IMPACT SINGLE STOREY SCHEME
FOOTPATHS						
Footpath 1 Viewpoint 1	High	Medium	Moderate - High	Small	Moderate Adverse	Slight-Moderate Adverse
Footpath 1 Viewpoint 2				Nil	Slight Adverse	Nil
Footpath 2 Viewpoint 3	High	Low - Medium	Moderate	Small	Moderate Adverse	Slight - Moderate Adverse
Footpath 2 Viewpoint 4	High	Low	Moderate	Small	Slight-Moderate Adverse	Slight – Moderate Adverse
Footpath 3 Viewpoint 5				Nil	Slight Adverse	Nil
ROADS						
Hollingworth Road Viewpoint 6, pedestrians	High	Low	Moderate	Small	Slight Moderate Adverse	Slight-Moderate Adverse
Hollingworth Road Viewpoint 6, vehicle users	Medium	Low	Moderate - Low	Small	Slight Adverse	Slight Adverse
Hollingworth Road Viewpoint 7, pedestrians	High	Low	Moderate	Large	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
Hollingworth Road Viewpoint 7, vehicle users	Medium	Low	Moderate - Low	Large	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
Hollingworth Road Viewpoint 8, pedestrians				Nil	Slight Adverse	Nil
Hollingworth Road Viewpoint 8, vehicle users	Medium	Low	Moderate-Low	Negligible	Slight- Minimal Adverse	Slight – Minimal Adverse
RESIDENTS						
85 Hollingworth Road	High			Negligible		
Lower Cleggswood Farm	High			Small		

Properties at Smithy Bridge	High			Negligible		
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10.0 Mitigation

The landscape mitigation measures are not taken account of in the description of the landscape and visual effects, and the mitigation measures set out below are proposed to prevent, reduce and offset adverse effects where these have been identified. The landscape mitigation proposals are shown on the landscape layout Figure 5.

10.1 The pedestrian footpath runs immediately adjacent to the Site and careful consideration of the appearance and detailing of the proposals has been important to minimise the impact of the built structure to users of the footpath.

The intention has been to create an exceptional new building which will enhance its environs and provide environmental benefits for the wider community.

10.2 The design, scale and location of the building has been carefully considered to reduce the visual impact of the structure. The proposed development site is a west facing slope fronting on to Hollingworth Road. The profile of the slope is not even, and it is intended to position the building where the slope hollows out slightly, minimising the amount of cut required. The now revised building would sit further below the top of the slope, and in views from the east, no part of the development would protrude above the slope and would not encroach on the skyline.

10.3 The revised proposals showing a single storey building with a roof that tilts back into the slope would reduce the impact of the building from all angles. The use of timber and stone as the key building materials both of which are used locally, and the reduction in the extent of glazing, would be sympathetic to the immediate area.

10.4 Lighting of external areas would be minimal for security only as there would be no evening use of the building now, with motion activated PIR being the only light source, consequently the development would have low visibility during the hours of darkness.

10.5 The car park would be largely surfaced with a reinforced grass surface to limit the visual intrusion of black tarmac, and the new stone gabion retaining wall would be designed as a green wall and planted with native climbing and trailing plants.

10.6 The building has been pulled back into the site to allow space along the frontage for a new native hedge. The hedge would continue along Hollingworth Road, following the entire frontage of Bank Top Farm, from the entrance at the southern tip of the Site, to the edge of the copse at the northern edge of the farm below the farmhouse. Further hedgerows are proposed immediately north of the development site linking from the road to the track to the farmhouse, and along the edge of the track itself. The hedge would enhance the local green infrastructure, introducing new wildlife corridors where there had been none before. The hedge would be maintained to allow views over into the Site but would provide some visual screening to the carpark. Both the hedge along the back of footpath and that going east - west up the field would provide a significant buffer to views of the Site from the road. The new hedge would be an appropriate new feature, an existing although leggy hedge runs along much of the west side of Hollingworth Road, and the character of Hollingworth Road would become softer and more contained for a distance of about 320m.

10.7 Additional standard tree planting is proposed to reinforce the historic corner plots within the upper part of the farm, recognising the importance of such historical features to local distinctiveness and increasing tree cover in an appropriate way.

10.8 An existing wet flush to the south of the proposed building would be retained and enhanced with new native plants such as yellow flag iris, cuckoo flower, marsh marigold and meadowsweet. A new raised path would give visitors access to this area, and to the meadow area beyond to the south. The wet flush would be visible from the road and footpath and could improve the local visual amenity.

10.9 The pasture immediately around the building would be developed as a typical acid grassland Pennine meadow, with appropriate grazing to keep the vegetation short but retain biodiversity. Appropriate native plants such as sheep sorrel, heath bedstraw, sneezewort and yarrow would be encouraged.

10.10 The gabion retaining structure would be planted with native species including ivy and bramble which would create a green wall, while providing opportunities for habitats for birds and invertebrates.

10.11 The landscape enhancements would improve biodiversity and visual amenity, showcasing how a Pennine farm could appear.

10.12 Within the area to the front of the building, a new kitchen garden is proposed incorporating herbs, fruit bushes and vegetable growing areas serving the kitchen and café, as well as providing for insect pollinators. Raised planters with small trees will introduce shelter, shade and colour to the terrace in front of the café creating an attractive frontage to the development. A small number of tables are set among these where visitors can sit and enjoy refreshments.

Wildflower seed mix for wetland area 84 m²

Latin name	English name	Percentage mix
Wetland and Pond Mix EP1 by Emorsgate Seeds		
Wild flowers		
Achillea ptarmica	Sneezewort	1%
Angelica sylvestris	Angelica	2%
Caltha palustris	Marsh marigold	0.20%
Eupatorium cannabinum	Hemp agrimony	2%
Filipendula ulmaria	Meadowsweet	2.60%
Geum rivale	Water avens	1%
Iris pseudacorus	Yellow flag iris	4%
Lotus pedunculatus	Greater bird's foot trefoil	1%
Lycchnis flos-cuculi	Ragged robin	1%
Lycopodium europaeus	Gypswort	1%
Lythrum salicaria	Purple loosestrife	0.50%
Ranunculus acris	Meadow buttercup	2.50%
Scrophularia auriculata	Water figwort	0.50%

Wildflower seed mix for meadow 2200m²

Latin name	English name	Percentage mix
Acid Grassland Mix Pro Flora 2 by DLF		
Wild Flowers		
20% wild flowers in mix comprising:		
Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	6%
Achillea ptarmica	Sneezewort	4%
Agrimonia procera	Fragrant agrimony	9%
Centaurea nigra	Black knapweed	9%
Digitalis purpurea	Foxglove	2%
Erodium cicutarium	Common Storks' bill	2%
Galium saxatile	Heath bedstraw	2%
Galium verum	Lady's bedstraw	11%
Hypochaeris radicata	Common cat's ear	2%
Leucanthemum vulgare	Ox eye daisy	6%
Lotus corniculatus	Bird's foot trefoil	1%
Lotus pedunculatus	Greater bird's foot trefoil	5%
Ranunculus acris	Meadow buttercup	11.00%
Rhianthus minor	Yellow rattle	7%
Rumex acetosa	Sorrel	6%
Rumex acetosella	Sheep's sorrel	2%
Stachys officinalis	Betony	1%
Succisa pratensis	devil's bit scabious	1%
Vicia cracca	Tufted vetch	7%
80% grasses comprising:		
Agrostis capillaris	Common bent	5%
Anthraxanthum odoratum	Sweet vernal grass	3%
Cynosurus cristatus	Crested dog's tail	38%
Deschampsia flexuosa	Wavy Hair grass	4%
Festuca ovina	Sheep's fescue	10%
Festuca rubra commutata	Chewing's fescue	40%

PLANT SCHEDULE FOR BANK TOP FARM SHOP

Plant Name/Description	English name	Specification	Size/spread	Density per m ² /%	Quantity
Planted gabion retaining wall 123m²					
Cotoneaster horizontalis	Rockspray	2 litre pot	60 - 90 cm	1/20%	24
Cymbalaria muralis	Ivy leaved toad flax	1 litre pot	well rooted clump	4/10%	48
Hedera helix	Ivy	2 litre pot/ BR	60 - 90 cm	1/20%	25
Lonicera periclymenum	Honeysuckle	2 litre pot	60 - 90 cm	1/20%	25
Lysimachia nummularia	Creeping Jenny	1 litre pot	well rooted clump	4/5%	24
Prunella vulgaris	Self heal	1 litre pot	well rooted clump	4/5%	25
Rubus fruticosus	Bramble	BR	30 - 40 cm	1/20%	24
Planting to top of gabion retaining wall					
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	BR 1+1	60 - 90 cm	2	50
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	BR 1+1	60 - 90 cm	2	50
Rosa canina	Dog rose	BR 1+1	60 - 90 cm	2	50
Ulex europaeus	Gorse	2 litre pot	20 - 30 cm	2	50
Herb and Kitchen garden					
Plant Name/Description	English name	Specification	Size/spread	Density per lin/m	Quantity
Planted in 1 m blocks in herb garden:					
Allium schoenoprasum	Chives				12
Bergamot didyma	Beebalm	2 litre	well rooted clump	5	5
Foeniculum vulgare	Fennel	2 litre	well rooted clump	3	3
Levisticum officinale	Lovage	2 litre	well rooted clump	4	4
Mentha spicata *	Spearmint	2 litre	well rooted clump	4	4
Petroselinum crispum	Parsley	2 litre	well rooted clump	9	9
Thymus vulgaris	Garden Thyme	1 litre	well rooted clump	12	12
Rosmarinus officinalis	Rosemary	3 litre	30 - 40 cm	3	13
Salvia officinalis	Sage	2 litre	20 - 30 cm	4	12
A root barrier around the mint planter is recommended.					
Trees:					
Apple 'Ribston Pippin'	Dessert apple	MM106 rootstock BR	Half standard	As shown	1
Damson 'Merryweather'	Damson	St Julien A BR	Half standard	As shown	1
Planters to terrace					
Strawberry 'Malling Opal'	Strawberry			In planters 1&2	8
Strawberry 'Cambridge Vigour'	Strawberry			In planters 3&4	8
Vinca minor 'Argenteo Variegata'	Lesser periwinkle	2 litre	15 - 20 cm	In planters 5&6	16
Trees:					
English name	Girth	Specification			
Amelanchier lamarckii	Snowy mespilus	10- 12 cm	Select Standard BR		3
Malus atrosanguinea 'Gorgeous'	Crab apple	10- 12 cm	Select Standard BR		3

LEGEND

- Meadow grassland
- Existing marshy area
- Proposed extended marshy area
- Proposed mixed native hedgerow
- Proposed decking in recycled plastic
- Proposed native shrubs to rear of building and retaining wall.
- Groundcover and perennial planting to herb garden and terrace.
- Planters with tree and groundcovers to terrace.
- Picnic tables
- Tarmac
- Myriad Priora permeable paving by www.marshall.co.uk
- Bodpave 85 recycled plastic porous paving grids for grass reinforcement.

Note: See drawing 474.02 for schedule for native mixed hedgerows.

Job title: BANK TOP FARM SHOP
Drawing title: LANDSCAPE LAYOUT
Scale: 1:500
Date: JULY 2022
Rev: E

Note: See drawing 474.02 for schedule for native mixed hedgerows.

LEGEND

	Meadow grassland
	Existing marshy area
	Proposed extended marshy area
	Proposed mixed native hedgerow
	Proposed decking in recycled plastic
	Proposed native shrubs to rear of building and retaining wall.
	Groundcover and perennial planting to herb garden and terrace.
	Planters with tree and groundcovers to terrace.
	Picnic tables
	Tarmac
	Myriad Piora permeable paving by www.marshall.co.uk
	Bodpave 85 recycled plastic porous paving grids for grass reinforcement.

REV E Amendment to key PB 17/10/23

REV D Minor amendment to paths PB 16/10/23

REV C Removal of minibus parking PB 12/10/23

REV B Revised building footprint PB 22/08/23

REV A Amendments to schedules and additional schedules, and hard landscaping

 Penny Bennett <i>Landscape Architects</i> Middle Bottomley, Bottomley Road Tudmorden Lancashire OL14 6QZ Tel 01706 812480 e-mail penny@pblandscape.co.uk	
Job title	Drawing No.
BANK TOP FARM SHOP	474/01
Drawing title	
LANDSCAPE LAAYOUT	
Scale	Date
1:500	JULY 2022
	Rev
	E

11.0 Conclusions

This is a small-scale proposal for a farm shop and café to diversify an existing Pennine farm. It is a revised proposal for a single storey and smaller footprint building and is of predominantly timber and stone construction with more limited glazing. Its roadside location is set in the context of road infrastructure, street lighting and traffic activity.

For both landscape and visual appraisals the effects are an improvement to the position assessed for the two storey scheme.

The proposals would introduce a new built element into an area on the edge of open country and Green Belt, and there would be slight change in character of Hollingworth Road in the immediate vicinity of the Site.

The context of this Site is in a state of flux, when first assessed the surroundings were fields and vacant land. The Akzo site on the land west of Hollingworth Road to the immediate north is now being developed for 126 homes. Further land to the west/southwest is subject to allocation for potential housing development. The landscape context is changing from predominantly rural to partly rural/ edge of urban and could change significantly further in the future.

The proposals have been designed to create an exceptional high quality small development that recognises landscape character, minimises impact and provides appropriate mitigation to address this.

The proposals would have a limited adverse landscape impact locally and some small beneficial effects. The landscape assessment has assessed the impacts on landscape character and the sense of openness as 'slight', with the greatest effect being on the local change of the landform which is assessed as Slight-Moderate. There would be some positive effects from the proposals resulting from the introduction of a diverse wildflower meadow, hedges and other landscaping.

The proposals have been reduced in scale to minimise the visual effects, and there are improvements in the extent of the effects from that assessed previously on both long range and immediate views.

The key visual impact would be from Hollingworth Road, where the proposals would be visible and represent a new development, and here the visual effects on road users and pedestrians are considered to be Moderate Adverse. The new housing development immediately north changes the context of this view, and it is now less 'in the countryside' rather on the edge of countryside. From other viewpoints views would be limited and screened or partially screened by existing vegetation.

A comprehensive enhancement scheme is proposed to offset, prevent and reduce any adverse visual and landscape effects to minimise the impact of the building. Key elements of this are:

- The location of the building set into the existing slope, well below the skyline where it would take advantage of existing vegetation screening on Hollingworth Road so the upper parts of the building would be visible but unobtrusive in views from the west;
- The local materials that are used, including primarily timber and stone which would reduce the visibility of the building and be appropriate in the Pennine setting;
- Landscaping to the gabion wall and use of grasscrete to the majority of the carpark.

The development of the site gives an opportunity to enhance the biodiversity and visual appeal of the areas around the building introducing:

- Extensive new hedgerows;
- New wildflower meadow areas;

- New areas of wetland flora;
- New pollinator rich planting areas to the front of the building.

These are described in more detail in in section 10 above.

This appraisal concludes that this is a high quality proposal which constitutes a new development in a location that is now changing to edge of countryside rather than rural and the landscape and visual effects would be acceptable.

Appendix 1 Viewpoints



Viewpoint 1: From footpath 1 east of Higher Bank Road Smithy Bridge

Date: 17th August 2023

Description: view eastwards towards Blackstone edge, centre right and the Walsden Valley and Littleborough (far left) with small parts of the proposals visible in the middle distance glimpsed between the vegetation alongside Hollingworth Road



Viewpoint 2: From footpath 1 east of Lower Cleggswood Farm

Date 1st March 2022

Description: the view looks towards Hollingworth Road in the middle distance with the proposals hidden behind existing dense vegetation on the left.



Viewpoint 3: From footpath 2 and the junction with footpath 3 east of Smithy Bridge.

Date: 17th August 2023

Description: view eastwards towards the Site across the former Akzo Nobel works, now under development for housing. Roadside vegetation would screen the lower part of the proposals.



Viewpoint 4: From footpath 2 100m west of Hollingworth Road

Date: 1st March 2022

Description: View eastwards towards the proposals which would be partially screened by existing roadside vegetation. See Viewpoint 4a also which shows the current albeit temporary situation.



Viewpoint 4a: From footpath 2100m west of Hollingworth Road

Date: 17th August 2023

Description: View of temporary stockpiles arising from development of Akzo Nobel site. This view has not been used for the visual assessment as it is believed it is not representative of the long term situation.



Viewpoint 5: From footpath 3 Heald Lane south of Lower Cleggswood Farm

Date: 11th April 2022

Description: View north east towards Littleborough (left), the proposals screened by existing vegetation in the middle distance.



Viewpoint 6: From Hollingworth Road north of the proposals.

Date: 17th August 2023

Description: View southwards, the edge of Smithy Bridge and the new development site is visible on the right, to the left the sycamores at the farm entrance, with the proposed scheme coming into view at the foot of the bank.



Viewpoint 7: From Hollingworth Road

Date: 1st March 2022

Description: View north eastwards directly into the site from the far side of Hollinworth Road, with Littleborough and Great Hill in the distance.



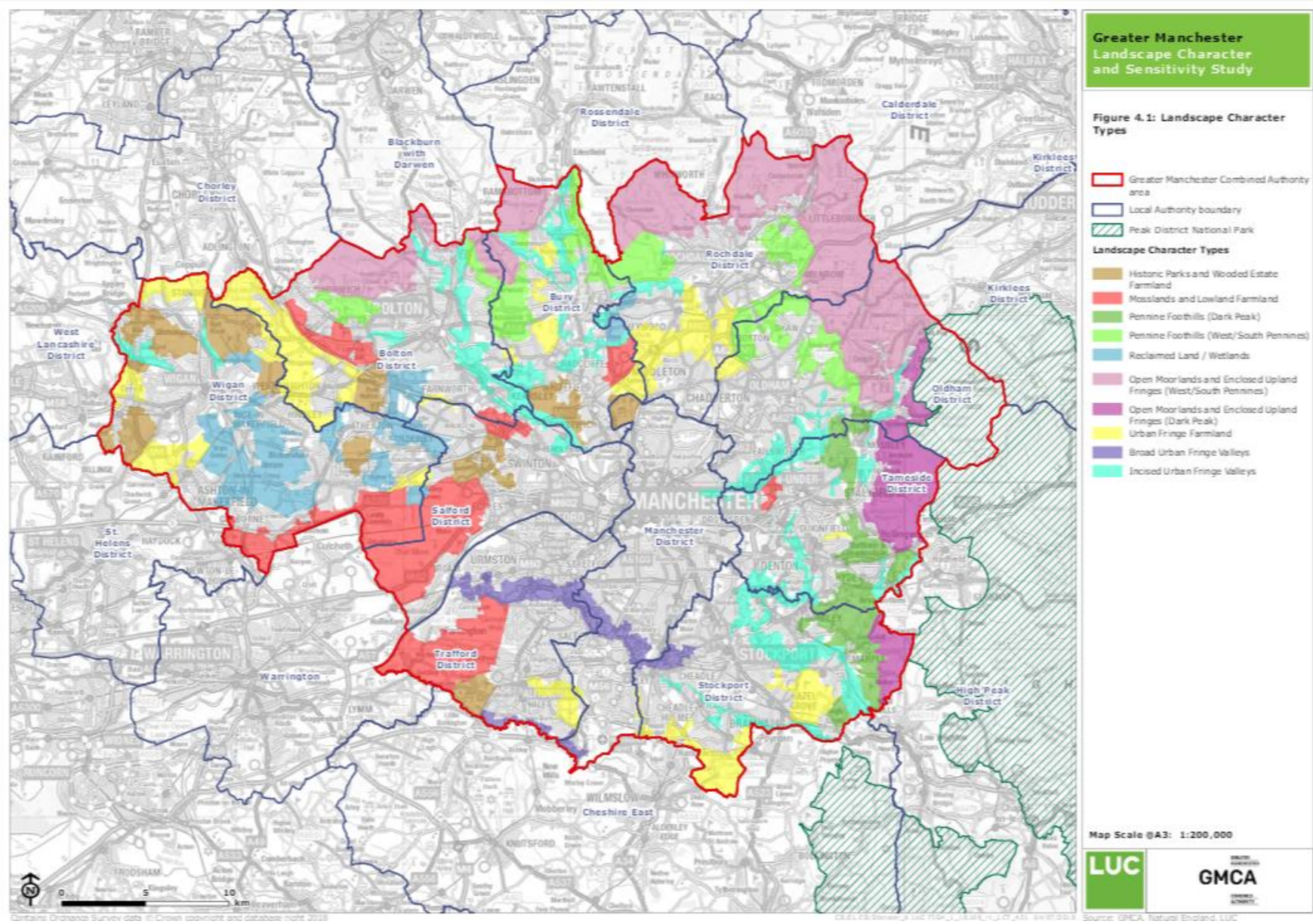
Viewpoint 8: From Hollingworth Road looking north

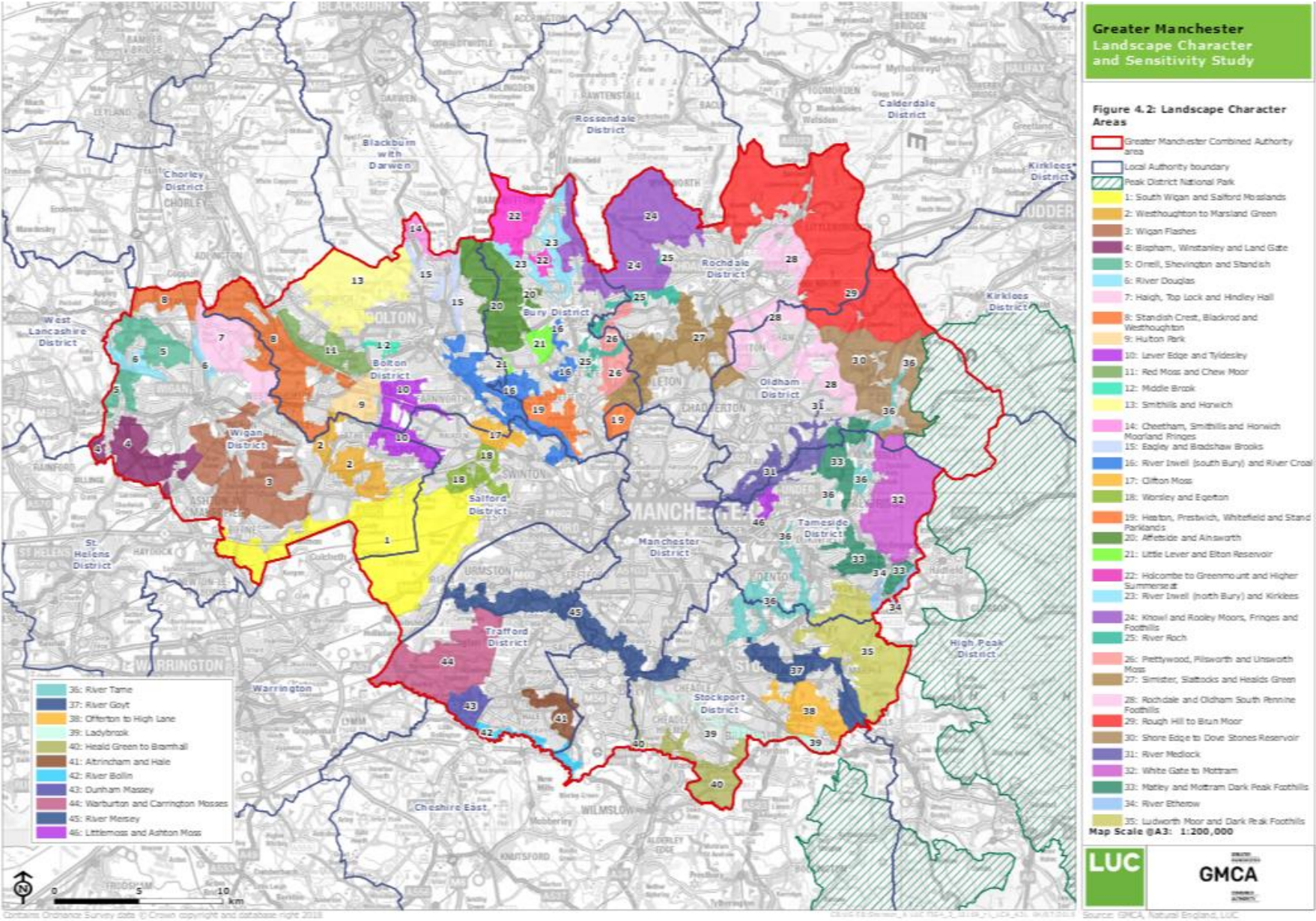
Date: 11th April 2022

Description: View northwards along Hollingworth Road with the proposals just discernible beyond the group of sycamores at the farm entrance.

Appendix 2

Landscape Character Types and Areas from Greater Manchester landscape character and sensitivity assessment





Bibliography

Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment produced for the Greater Manchester Combined Authority LUC 2018

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Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan 2006

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Hollin Bank Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Evance February 2023

Hollingworth Road Proposed Site Layout Watson Batty Architects 2023

Hollingworth Road Proposed boundary treatments Watson Batty Architects 2023