

Bank Top Farm Littleborough: Additional Landscape Note

The proposals currently submitted to Rochdale MBC are for a farm shop and associated carpark located immediately adjacent to Hollingworth Road the B6225.

The LVA submitted to the Council for the scheme does not consider a location for the farm shop and carpark immediately adjacent to Bank Top Farm and its buildings. Following comments from Officers at RMBC, these notes consider the potential landscape and visual effects of locating the farm shop and carpark at a higher level adjacent to Bank Top Farm, also the visual effects of improvements to site access that would be required for such a siting.

Bank Top Farm lies at around 185 metres AOD, just under 30 metres above Hollingworth Road, it is located on a northwest facing slope to the southeast of Littleborough town centre. Access to the farm buildings area is via a narrow track accessed from Hollingworth Road at the south of the farm, which diagonally ascends the steep bank up to the farm buildings.

The farm comprises a number of buildings including a large animal shed and machinery shed south of the farmhouse with other buildings, silos and operational yard areas adjacent to and east of the farmhouse.

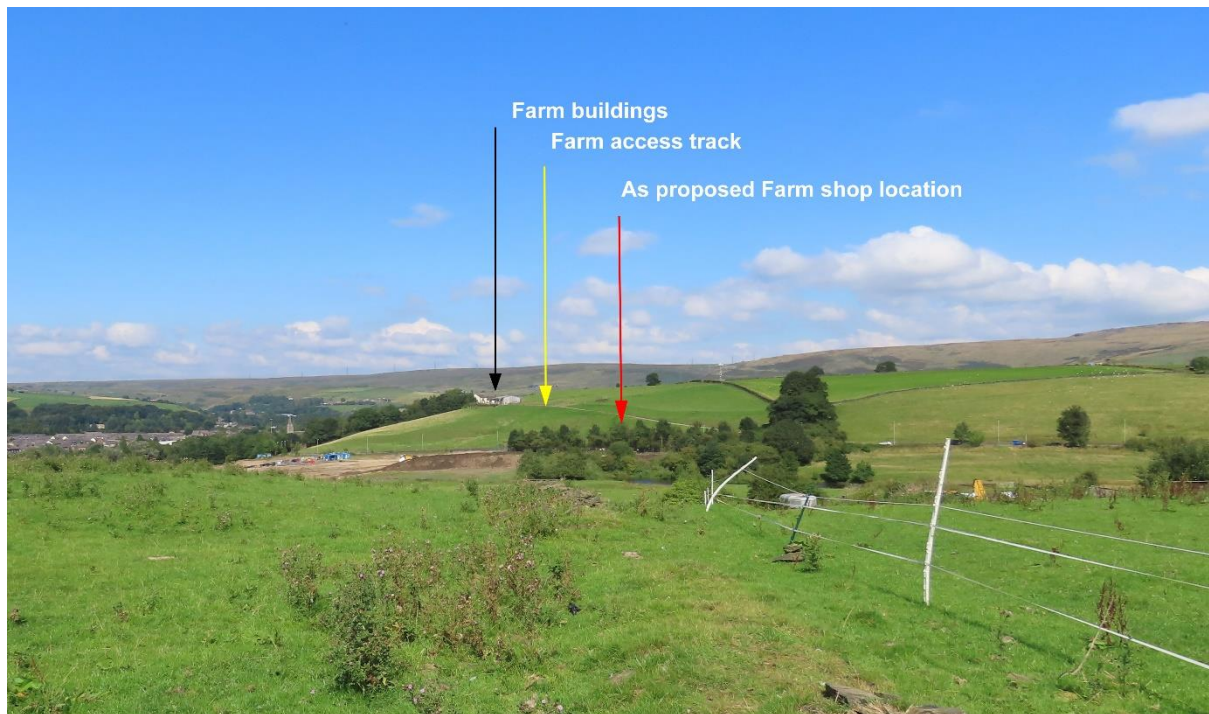
To avoid potential conflict between members of the public and farm operations including the movement of animals, machinery and general farm workings, and the arrangement of the farm in relation to buildings, storage areas, field accesses and routes between, and the private residential house area of the applicants (details also provided in other supporting report) any new shop development, comprising a new building and car parking area, would need to be located to the south of the existing animal and machinery shed.

Locating the farm shop and car park south of these buildings but more 'adjacent to the farm' at the upper level, would reduce some of the visual impact of the as proposed farm shop on Hollingworth Road frontage to passers-by in vehicles and pedestrians using the pavement from Hollingworth Road, as the farm shop building would no longer be visible from the road; however as such movements are pass-by and transient, the benefit of this removal of impact on views is considered limited in terms of Visual Appraisal. As referenced in other submissions, loss of direct visibility of the farm shop from the road is however highly negative in terms of viability and the aims of the farm diversification to serve pass by and tourism custom and for customers easily being able to view and access the location of the proposed facility.

It must also be recognised that the siting of the farm shop and carpark as proposed in the application is at the lowest point of the farm and nestled into the slope of the hill to minimise long range views.

This is seen on the photograph provided in the submitted LVA and reproduced below:





View east from footpath 1 west of site

Siting at Farm Complex

Sitting the farm shop building and car park at the higher level would result in a number of landscape and visual impacts as follows:

- New access junction requirement
- Significant improvements to the access lane including pedestrian footway provision along its length
- Siting of a further building and car park near the crest of the ridge that is visible in long range views from the west, northwest and southwest
- Visual effects relating to car movements and lighting associated with the carpark and car movements would also occur

It is considered that there would be some **moderate** and **large** visual impacts associated with works to the access track which would be required which would be visible from the Hollingworth Road and long range views as from the west and other properties (as set out in the LVA report).

To provide safe access to the farm shop from Hollingworth Road, the track would need to be either entirely widened to take traffic in two way directions or widened to create new passing places and for pedestrian footway provision. Access implications are considered in detail in the associated Highways Technical Note. New retaining walls on the access track would be clearly visible from Hollingworth Road and wider areas from the west and there would be **moderate** and **large** visual impacts.

The farm access entrance from Hollingworth Road is narrow and the Highways Technical Note has confirmed it would need to be relocated and realigned to achieve visibility and safe entry and exit from the site. This revised location would have an impact on the tight group of mature sycamore trees at the site entrance, which lie close to either side of the track.

The trees are the only large mature trees in the immediate locality and form a prominent group on the east side of Hollingworth Road.



If the entrance is relocated, one mature tree on the west side of the group, below the track would certainly be lost, and it is considered that the works and rebuilding of the retaining wall on the east side of the track would mean the loss of one and likely a further two trees would probably be lost. Stone walls and stone retaining walls would be lost and would need to be reinstated here too. This would result in **large adverse** visual effects.



Image from Google earth showing the trees at the entrance to Bank Top Farm.



Image from Google earth indicating how close the lower tree is to the existing track.

Bank Top Farm lies on the northeast side of Cleggswood Hill which is a prominent low ridge to the southeast of Littleborough and is visible from many views from Littleborough and Smithy Bridge as upland pasture with Blackstone Edge and the High Moors of the south Pennines lying directly beyond. From the southwest, Cleggswood Hill frames views northwards up the Roch Valley towards Walsden. Bank Top Farm and its buildings is widely visible in views from Littleborough and Smithy Bridge, on the side of the hill and appears in context as a small Pennine farm. The rolling landscape of Cleggswood Hill is open, with drystone walls containing moderately sized fields punctuated by occasional mature sycamores.

Development of the farm shop and car park on land south of the existing farm buildings would bring a new building onto the site, extending the spread of buildings and development along the ridge: earthworks necessary to level the ground out to create a carparking and delivery area and then the continuing visual effects of a car park at this ridge edge, with lighting at late afternoon times in winter, and numerous car movements along the access track up the side of the hill and passing places and embankment and footpath works to the length of the lane.



The reprofiling required to create a new carparking area would be out of context with the Open Moorlands and Enclosed Upland Fringes landscape character type as would the creation of an embankment along the length of the access track with larger retaining elements at passing places.

Any development south of Bank Top Farm would be visible from many parts of Littleborough including the western section of Calderbrook Road and areas north west of Calderbrook Road, and parts of residential areas south of Rochdale Road and the east side of Smithy Bridge. It would be highly visible from almost the entirety of footpaths 1, 2 and 3 crossing the open country immediately west of the site (see aerial map below extracted from the LVA), and new development would be glimpsed from the towpath of the Rochdale Canal in a few places. The visual implications of development, vehicle movements and increased lighting in this location is considered to be **moderate to large on such views**. Views are also possible from parts of the area around Hollingworth Lake though these have not been examined on the ground, these would be from a distance and would be small visual effects.



Aerial map from LVA showing footpaths assessed for visual impact

In contrast to the scheme as proposed at the lower level on Hollingworth Road, the visual effects of siting the proposals at this higher level would be much more widespread and would affect receptors who are walkers on surrounding footpaths west of the site enjoying local views and local people living and moving around the area, to a **moderate to large** extent depending on the location. The as submitted proposals alongside the main road have a smaller visual envelope, and would affect users of Hollingworth Road, and walkers on parts of the identified path to a lesser degree.

The effects of the revised access arrangements and removal of some of the sycamore trees at the entrance, if required and retaining works to the track to widen it, would have a **large** visual effect on views from Hollingworth Road, and potentially **slight, slight to moderate** and **moderate** visual effects on views from paths 1-3 crossing land to the west.

It is also to be noted that a proposal for a single wind turbine on the higher land area of the farm was dismissed at appeal on visual impact grounds. As such, the introduction of non-agricultural uses at the available lower-level position where lower visual effects result, is considered a betterment in LVA terms compared to a siting at a higher level position on the farm. Further the lower-level position as proposed is screened by existing vegetation and can be more assimilated into the landscape by



proposed landscaping as opposed to at the higher level where landscaping, particularly to the carpark, would be a new and less characteristic feature of the Open Moorland and Enclosed Upland Fringe landscape.

PB 8th February 2024

