

LANDSCAPE & VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Unit B, Birch Business Park, Heywood

September 2021

on behalf of:
Yeagate Limited



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SECTION A - 1: INTRODUCTION

LVIA APPOINTMENT

- 1.1 Urban Wilderness was commissioned by Yeargate Limited to undertake a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment for a proposed industrial redevelopment at Birch Business Park (site reference: AL/EMP/29 – Birch Industrial Estate in Rochdale Borough Councils Draft Allocations Plan).
- 1.2 This Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment considers proposals for a warehouse, referred to in this report as Unit B. Proposals have been developed by Fletcher Rae Architects (refer to page 16 and 17).
- 1.3 This assessment seeks to identify any potential impacts that may arise as a consequence of demolishing an existing industrial unit and replacing with a new, larger modern unit which will provide for current and future, market tested needs.
- 1.4 Following feedback from the local authority, the development proposals have been revised to make architectural adjustments and to refine proposals for proposed car parking and infrastructure to allow space along the boundary of Moss Hall Road. This is to allow for the implementation of a robust landscape strategy to help soften the interface between the developed edge and green belt and to increase the level of screening of the building and car park.
- 1.5 The objectives of this assessment are to provide a baseline analysis of the site followed by a Landscape and Visual Analysis of the proposal, identifying suitable landscape interventions to mitigate identified impacts and help integrate the development within its broader landscape context.
- 1.6 This assessment considers the change resulting from the development on both the landscape resources of the site and on the visual amenity of people who live, work and travel in the area. Landscape character and resources are considered separately from visual amenity. While these two important landscape considerations are interlinked, they perform different roles within their environment, have different pressures exerted on them and require separate evaluation.

- 1.7 The photography within this report was taken during site visits on 13th August 2021 in clear weather conditions and good visibility. All UW photograph was undertaken with a Nikon D7200 DSLR using a 35mm focal length. All photographs have been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute's TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals (September 2019).

SITE LOCATION

- 1.8 The site is located within the town boundary of Heywood, which is a town in the Metropolitan Borough of Rochdale, Greater Manchester.
- 1.9 The Business Park is encompassed by the Rochdale Green Belt which predominantly consists of enclosed agricultural fields used for rearing livestock.
- 1.10 Further afield, the study area extends to:
 - South: The M62 runs in an east to west direction, approximately 0.5km to the south of the Business Park. Beyond the M62 cuttings are agricultural fields which provide an undeveloped buffer between the M62 and the northern extent of the town of Middleton.
 - North: The large-scale Pilsworth Quarry, Heywood Distribution Park and Broadfield Industrial Park lie approximately 0.7km north of the site, converging and extending in a north to north east direction. Beyond this industrial setting is the main urban area of Heywood, which is located approximate 1.75 km to the north east of the site.
 - East: The urban edge of Hopwood (an area of Heywood) is located approximately 1.5km to the east of the site.
 - West: The M66 runs in a north to south direction approximate 1km to the west of the site. Beyond this elevated section of motorway is Pilsworth, Bury Golf Course and urban areas of Hollins, Sunnybank and Unsworth, which are all outer lying conurbations of Bury.

- 1.11 Birch Business Park is 18.5 hectares in size. The proposed internal area for redevelopment is 2.01ha, the boundary of which sits wholly within the existing business park's curtilage.
- 1.12 Birch Business Park is allocated as a site for employment uses, as part of South Heywood Employment Area within the Rochdale Core Strategy (adopted October 2016).

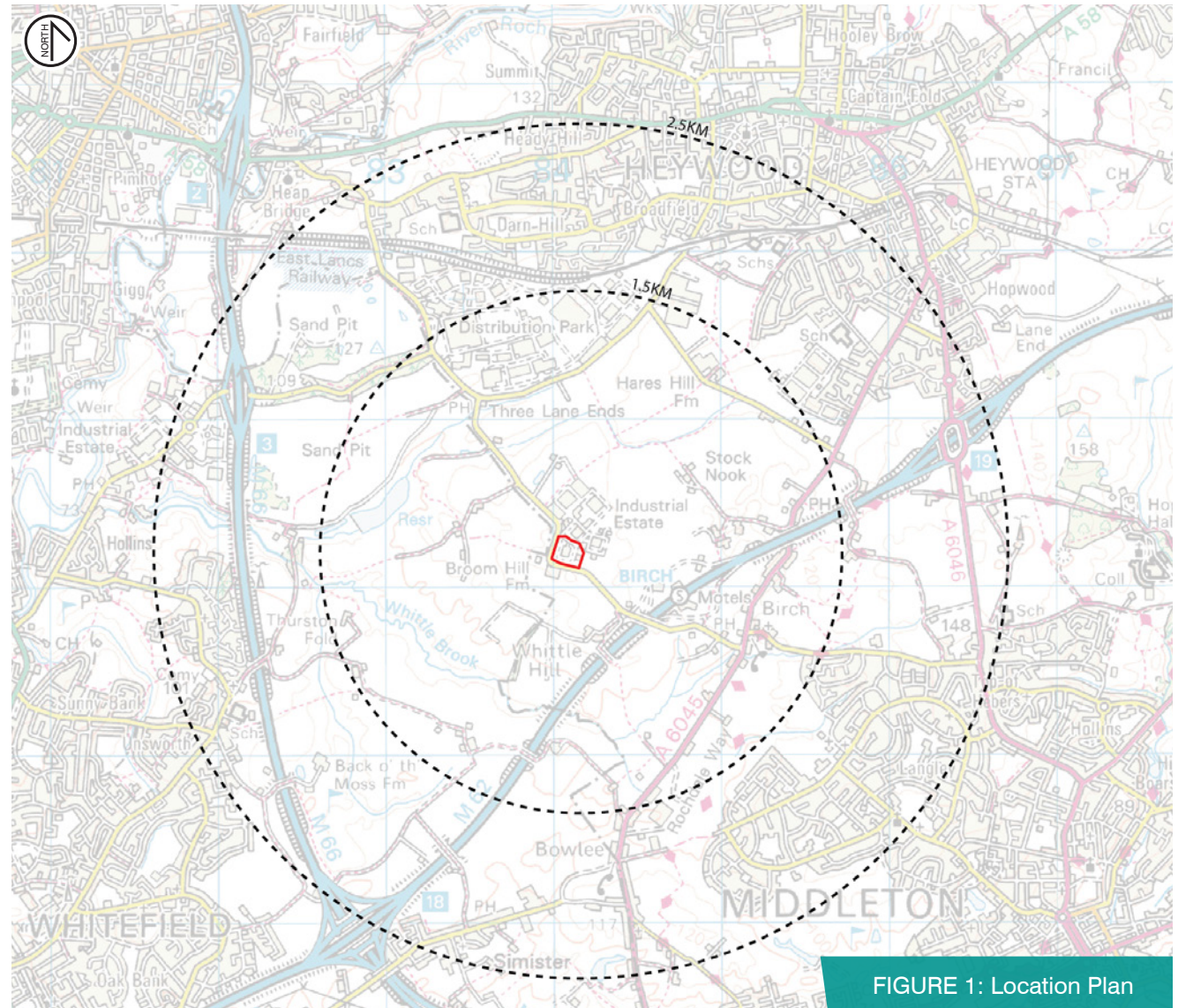


FIGURE 1: Location Plan

SECTION A - 2: METHODOLOGY

CURRENT GUIDANCE

- 2.1 This assessment has been carried out in accordance with the “Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment” (3rd. Edition, 2013) produced by The Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment.

PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENT

- 2.2 The report studies the effects of a given development on (i) the landscape character and landscape resources of the site and its environs, and (ii) the visual amenity experienced by people within, through and surrounding the proposed development. These two components are described separately within this report (see Figure 2).
- 2.3 Landscape impacts describe the likely effects of the development proposals on the physical character and quality of the landscape – i.e. the Environmental Resource. In a similar way, Visual effects describe the likely changes that the development will have within the views of receptors, i.e. people that have a viewing opportunity of the development such as local residents, walkers, road users, etc.
- 2.4 There are six principle parts to the assessment process, namely:
- Identify the changes proposed as a result of proposed development and their likely effects, considering inherent mitigation from the outset.
 - Describe the baseline condition of the site, its environs and the extent of visibility available to surrounding receptors.
 - Ascribe an evaluation of the landscape’s sensitivity to change, combining judgments of the landscape’s susceptibility to change of the type proposed and the value attached to the landscape.
 - Ascribe an evaluation of each visual receptor’s sensitivity, combining judgments of their susceptibility to change and the value attributed to their view.

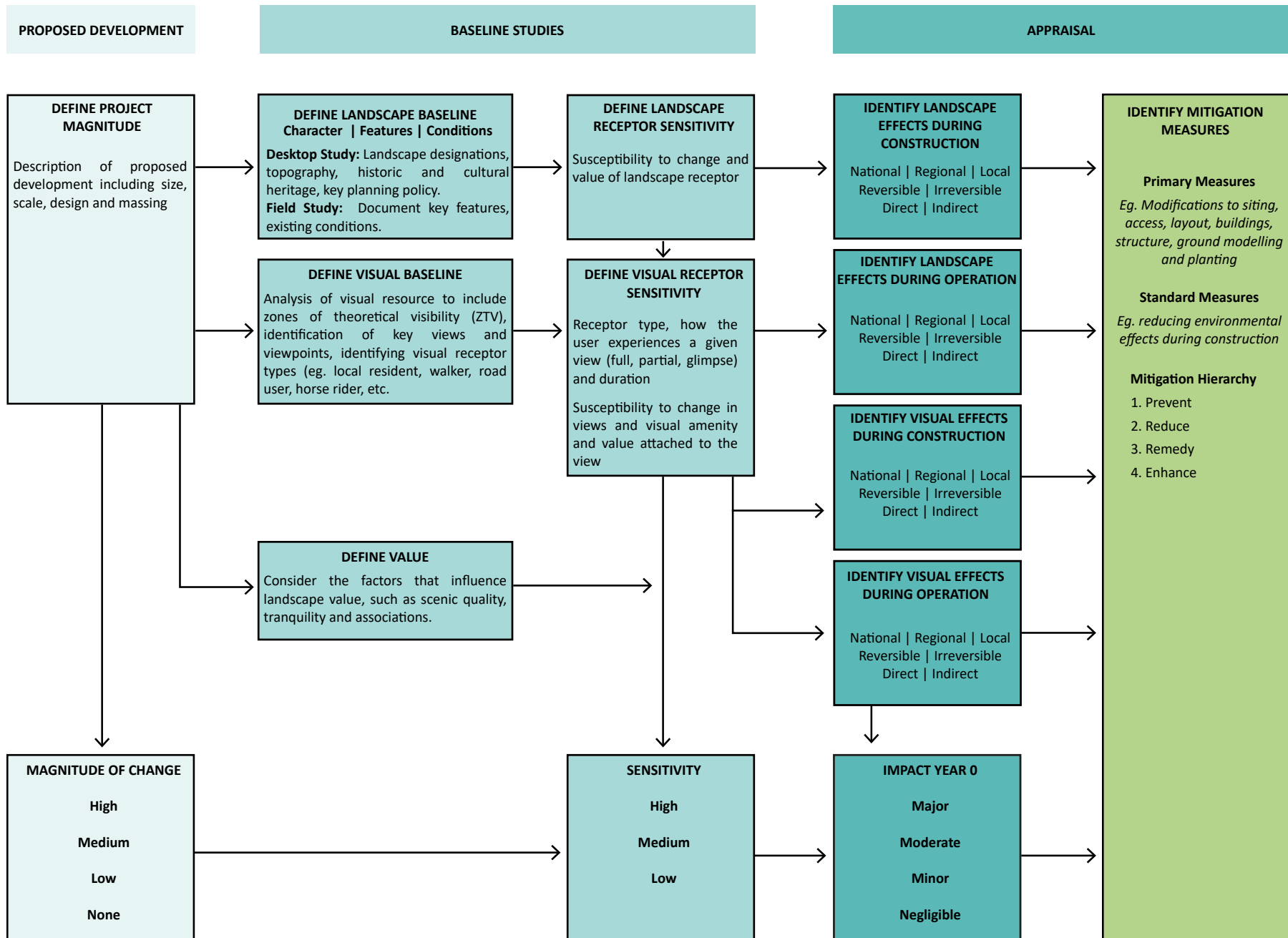
- Identify any impacts predicted to occur within the landscape and within views towards the development.
- Identify further mitigation (as required) to prevent, reduce or alleviate anticipated negative effects and assess any residual effects predicted to occur once further mitigation has become established.

- 2.5 Predicted effects may occur both during construction as well as operation / occupation of the development and as such each stage of the development should be assessed individually.

- 2.6 Whilst quantitative measurements should be employed, where practicable the GLVIA guidance explains that a degree of professional experience and judgment should be exercised during the Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) process and that these judgments should be “*appropriate and proportional*” (GLVIA (2013), cl. 2.24, para. 1.17). Professional opinions are given within the framework of “*clear and transparent methods so that the reasoning applied at different stages can be traced and examined by others.*” GLVIA (2013), cl. 2.24, page 21.

DEFINING THE BASELINE

- 2.7 The baseline study aims to provide an appropriate benchmark from which an appraisal of effects is based. The baseline sets out what the landscape is comprised of, describing its constituent parts, its function, its character, condition, value and susceptibility to change. It also describes the visual resource i.e. the area within which the development may be visible, the people (visual receptors) who may have views of the development and the nature of these views, i.e. whether they are distant, up close, open, constrained, transient, prolonged, etc.
- 2.8 Where existing landscape character assessments are available, the baseline landscape is described with reference to published reports.



SENSITIVITY TO CHANGE

- 2.9 The GLVIA3 states that sensitivity is *“the nature of the receptor likely to be affected.”* GLVIA3 (2013), cl. 3.24, page 38.
- 2.10 Both the landscape and visual receptors with potential views of the proposed development are ascribed a ‘sensitivity’. Judgments on sensitivity are derived by assessing the landscape value / value attributed to the view of the visual receptor and the landscape / receptor’s susceptibility to change of the type proposed. Judgments regarding sensitivity are taken forward in combination with an assessment of magnitude to determine significance.

Value

- 2.11 The value of a landscape receptor is defined within the GLVIA3 as: *“...the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society, bearing in mind that a landscape may be valued by different stakeholders for a whole variety of reasons...Landscapes or their component parts may be valued at the community, local, national or international levels.”* GLVIA3 (2013), cl. 5.19, page 80.
- 2.12 The value of the landscape is recorded on a scale of ‘National’, ‘Regional’ or ‘Local’. Where there is no published evidence to support an assessment of value, an evaluation should be made based on the criteria outlined in Box 5.1 of the GLVIA3 (refer to Table 1). It is important to note, however, that an assessment of value requires professional judgment, where a standard approach cannot be considered appropriate in all cases and will vary from place to place. (GLVIA para 5.29 bullet 1)
- 2.13 The value of a visual receptor is determined through judgments made by combining an assessment of susceptibility to change of the type proposed with visual amenity and the value attached to particular views (refer to Table 2). An assessment is made for each receptor with reference to representative views.

- 2.14 Where published evidence is available to support an assessment of value the following will be applied:

- International or national landscape designations, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, World Heritage Sites, and Scheduled Ancient Monuments (SAMs), typically comprise settings of high landscape quality and as such should be considered of High landscape value.
- Regional designations such as Special Landscape Areas or Conservation Areas, listed buildings, registered parks and gardens, and ancient woodland should be considered on their individual merits, but are typically considered to be of medium or high value depending upon their extents and the cultural and / or natural links they have to the landscape.
- Local landscape designations such as Public Open Space, Tree Preservation Orders, Areas of Local Landscape Importance etc, may be considered important at a local level and as such their value should be considered on a scale of Low to High. An assessment against Table 1 should be undertaken.

Table 1: Value of Landscape Receptors

Assessment of Landscape Receptor Value		
Low	Medium	High
Condition/ quality		
A landscape with little or no sign of management and / or a neglected landscape, with individual elements in a poor state or repair.	A landscape with signs of piecemeal management and / or showing signs of decline, with individual elements in a moderate state of repair.	A well managed and / or largely intact landscape, with individual elements in a good state or repair.
Scenic quality		
A landscape with little or no aesthetic appeal and/or amenity value.	A landscape with moderate aesthetic appeal and/or amenity value.	A landscape with high aesthetic appeal and/or amenity value.
Rarity and representativeness		
A landscape which does not contain rare landscape types or features.	A landscape which contains characteristic but un-unique landscape types or features.	A landscape which contains one or more rare landscape types or features.
Conservation interests		
A landscape with no or limited heritage /cultural / nature conservation content.	A landscape with some heritage / cultural /nature conservation content.	A landscape with rich heritage /cultural /nature conservation content.

Assessment of Landscape Receptor Value (cntd.)		
Low	Medium	High
Recreation value		
A landscape, with no or limited contribution to recreational experience and/or amenity value.	A landscape which provides some contribution to recreational experience and/or amenity value.	A distinct landscape which forms a strong contribution to recreational experience and/or amenity value.
Perceptual aspects		
A landscape with prominent detractors intrinsic to its character.	A landscape that retains some perceptual values (wildness/ tranquility etc) amidst some perceptual detractors.	A wild, tranquil or unspoilt landscape without noticeable detractors.
Cultural associations		
A landscape without recorded cultural associations.	A landscape with some and/or moderately valued cultural associations.	A landscape of rich and/ or highly valued cultural associations.
Overall Judgement of Receptor Value		
Low value – receptor poorly reflects high and medium value criteria above.	Medium value – receptor moderately reflects high and medium value criteria above.	High value – receptor strongly reflects high and medium value criteria above.

Table 2: Value of Visual Receptors

Assessment of Visual Receptor Value		
Low	Medium	High
Value attached to particular views		
Views from and visual amenity associated with every-day locations or routes that do not benefit from any designation or cultural associations.	Views from and visual amenity associated with viewpoints of district or local importance, local visitor attractions or public open space and routes where views and visual amenity form an integral part of the attraction. Views from regional or local landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas or equivalent.	Views from and visual amenity associated with viewpoints of regional or national importance, popular visitor attractions where views and visual amenity form a key part of the attraction or route. Inclusion within guidebooks or cultural references such as literature and art or as part of heritage character. Views from areas with national designations such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty or regional or local landscape designations such as Special Landscape Areas or equivalent.

Susceptibility

- 2.15 The GLVIA defines susceptibility as the ability of a landscape to accommodate change '*without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation*'. With regard to visual amenity, susceptibility relates to the occupation or activity of receptors and 'the extent to which their attention or interest relates to the view'. (GLVIA paras 5.40 and 6.32 respectively)
- 2.16 Receptor susceptibility is identified in Table 3 and is applicable to landscape character areas as whole, designated areas, individual characteristics that contribute to the overall landscape as well as to visual receptors. Susceptibility can relate to particular aesthetic or perceptual aspects or the compliance or otherwise to current landscape planning policy / strategy.
- 2.17 Susceptibility of a landscape receptor and / or visual receptor to change is specific to the type and scale of development proposed. Judgments on susceptibility are considered on a scale of High, Medium or Low as per Table 3.

Table 3: Susceptibility to Change of Landscape and Visual Receptors

Susceptibility	Description
High	Little or no ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline situation and / or the achievement of landscape planning policies and strategies. Little or no ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences to visual receptors whose primary viewing interest is proprietary, relates to heritage assets, visitor attractions, recognised scenic routes or whose attention or interest is focused on the landscape.
Medium	Some ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline or the delivery of landscape planning policies and strategies. Some ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences to visual receptors with a secondary interest in the landscape such as travellers passing through the landscape (motorists) or the users of recreation areas whose attention or interest is not the primary focus.
Low	An ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline or the delivery of landscape planning policies and strategies. An ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences to visual receptors with no or limited visual interest in the landscape such as people at work, travellers passing through an area at speed.

2.18 As noted sensitivity is determined by combining judgments relating to value and susceptibility to change of the type proposed. Judgments on sensitivity are considered on a scale of High, Medium or Low as per Table 4.

Table 4: Sensitivity to Change of Landscape and Visual Receptors

High	A landscape or visual receptor considered to be highly susceptible to change of the type proposed with little or no capacity to accommodate such change. A highly valued landscape or visual receptor with particularly distinctive characteristics whether directly demonstrable or perceived.
Medium	A landscape or visual receptor which is considered to be potentially tolerant to change of the type proposed. A landscape or visual receptor which have less obvious or partially degraded characteristics whether directly demonstrable or perceived.
Low	A landscape or visual receptor which is considered to be tolerant to change of the type proposed. A landscape or visual receptor with degraded characteristics and the capacity to accommodate change of the type proposed.

MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE

- 2.19 The GLVIA3 states that magnitude is “*the nature of the effect likely to occur.*” GLVIA3 (2013), cl. 3.24, page 38.
- 2.20 The Magnitude of Change predicted is determined by the size and scale of effects on the landscape, the duration and reversibility of anticipated effects, the integration of effects with the baseline and the geographical extent of the area that will be affected.
- 2.21 With regard to visual receptors the magnitude of effects are considered in relation to the degree of change in the view, change in the composition of a view, the manner to which the proposed development visually integrates with its surrounds, (blends in or contrasts), the angle of view, the distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development and the extent of the development that will be visible i.e. all of the development or only a small proportion of the development.
- 2.22 For transient receptors, such as motorists for example, the relative amount of time over which views of the proposed development will be available are considered. Effects on the landscape and visual receptors can be permanent or temporary i.e. long term or short term. Also, they can be direct or indirect, i.e. directly as a result of the development or indirectly through for example off-site services diversions or junction alterations, etc.
- 2.23 The magnitude of effects is considered during construction, on completion of the development and following the establishment of planting, usually taken at 15 years post completion. A variation of this period can be applied dependent upon the specific project and / or location of the site.
- 2.24 The size and scale of effects includes the proportion or extent of the landscape or view that will be lost or altered, the degree to which aesthetic or perceptual elements are altered and whether changes effect key characteristics of the landscape or view which are considered critical to this character.
- 2.25 Scale relates to whether effects are considered to effect the site and / or the wider landscape setting of the site (local), the wider character area within which the site is located (regional) or the wider region (national).
- 2.26 Reversibility considers whether effects are fully reversible, i.e. the landscape or view can be returned to its baseline condition, partially reversible, i.e mitigation would resemble the original baseline condition or irreversible, i.e. changes are permanent.
- 2.27 Duration is defined in the GLVIA as Long Term, between 10 to 25 years, mid term 5 to 10 years and short term 0 to 5 years.
- 2.28 The following scale is used to quantify the magnitude of effect:

Table 5: Magnitude of Change as experienced by Landscape and Visual Receptors

Magnitude	Description
High Adverse	A considerable variance to the landscape, or view thereof, degrading it's integrity
Medium Adverse	A noticeable variance to the landscape, or view thereof, which is at odds with the defined baseline
Low Adverse	A barely perceptible change to the landscape, or view thereof, which is slightly at odds with the defined baseline
No change	No discernible change in the landscape, or view thereof
Low Beneficial	A modest change to the landscape, or view thereof, that results in discernible benefits to landscape/visual resource
Medium Beneficial	A notable variance to the landscape, or view thereof, that benefits the landscape/visual resource
High Beneficial	A considerable variance to the landscape, or view thereof, that results in significant benefits to the landscape/visual resource

SIGNIFICANCE

- 2.29 The assessment of significance is derived by combining the judgments made about landscape and / or visual receptor sensitivity and the magnitude of change within the landscape and or for each receptor. This assessment should include a clear narrative to explain the reasoning behind judgments made.
- 2.30 The GLVIA3 states the following
- “There are no hard and fast rules about what makes a significant effect, and there cannot be a standard approach since circumstances vary with the location and landscape context and with the type of proposal. At the opposite ends of a spectrum it is reasonable to say that:*
- *Major loss or irreversible negative effects, over an extensive area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that are key to the character of nationally valued landscapes are likely to be of the greatest significance;*
 - *Reversible negative effects of short duration, over a restricted area, on elements and/or aesthetic and perceptual aspects that contribute to but are not key characteristics of the character of landscapes of community value are likely to be of least significance and may, depending on the circumstances, be judged as not significant; and*
 - *Where assessments of significance place landscape effects between these extremes, judgments must be made about whether or not they are significant, with full explanations of why these conclusions have been reached.” GLVIA3 (2013), cl. 5.56, pages 92-3*

Further guidance on the significance of visual effects: that:

- “Effects on people who are particularly sensitive to changes in views and visual amenity are more likely to be significant
- Effects on people at recognised and important viewing points or from recognised scenic routes are more likely to be significant.
- Large-scale changes which introduce new, non-characteristic or discordant or intrusive elements into the view are more likely to be significant than small changes or changes involving features already present within the view.” GLVIA3 (2013), cl. 6.44, page 116

- 2.31 Effect significance can be either adverse or beneficial as attributed by the magnitude of change (see Table 5). Whether adverse or beneficial, the significance of effects during construction, at year 0 on completion of construction and at year 15 are evaluated within this assessment.
- 2.32 The following matrix identifies the correlation between receptor sensitivity and the anticipated magnitude of change exerted upon the receptor by the proposed development. This determines the significance of any identified effects upon a receptor.

2.33 Table 6: Significance of Change as Defined by Sensitivity and Magnitude

Determining Significance of Effects					
Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change				
		No Change	Low	Medium	High
	Low	Negligible	Slight	Slight	Moderate
	Medium	Negligible	Slight	Moderate	Substantial/ Moderate
	High	Negligible	Moderate/ Slight	Substantial/ Moderate	Substantial

- 2.34 Descriptors of significance (see Table 6) are outlined in the following table.

Table 7: Significance of Change to Landscape and Visual Receptors

Significance	Description
Substantial	An effect considered very important in the decision making process.
Moderate	An effect that is notable and one that is generally considered to be material in the decision making process.
Slight	An effect that will be noticed, but is not considered to be an important factor in the decision making process
Negligible	An effect that will be discernible, but of very limited consequences and one that not important or relevant to the decision process.

- 2.35 The significance of predicated effects on a landscape or visual receptors is defined through the described methodology and, where applicable to specific site related factors, the professional judgment of the individual undertaking the LVIA. Where the latter is necessary the professional judgment is acknowledge and explained within the context of the assessment.

MITIGATION

- 2.36 The GLVIA3 states the following for the mitigation of landscape effects, “Where landscape effects are judged to be significant and adverse, proposals for preventing/avoiding, reducing, or offsetting or compensating for them (referred to as mitigation) should be described. The significant landscape effects remaining after mitigation should be summarised as the final step in the process.” GLVIA3 (2013), cl. 5.57, page 93
- 2.37 And similarly for visual effects “Where visual effects are judged to be significant and adverse, proposals for preventing/avoiding, reducing, or offsetting or compensating for them (referred to as mitigation) should be described. The significant landscape effects remaining after mitigation should be summarised as the final step in the process.” (GLVIA3 (2013), cl. 6.45, page 116

- 2.38 Three types of mitigation are considered as follows:

- ‘Inherent’ mitigation - or primary mitigation, where mitigation has been designed into the proposals described in Section 3 and which is considered from the outset. Inherent mitigation may include screen planting, open space and habitat creation, assessed for its impact on the landscape or change to visual amenity.
- Construction - This relates to good practice during the construction stage of the development and includes hoarding, tree protection, restricted working hours etc.
- ‘Actionable’ mitigation - or secondary mitigation, where possible interventions will help prevent, reduce or offset the anticipated significant adverse effects on landscape or visual amenity predicted to arise as a result of development.
- Due to the ‘Inherent’ measures taken within this iterative process ‘Actionable’ measures are not typically required. Should any ‘Actionable’ measures be identified these will be identified accordingly and residual effects reported in Section 12.
- Standard construction and operational management practices to reduce effects during the construction period are outlined in Section 11.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

- 2.39 For the purposes of this report, residual Moderate to Major and Major effects are considered to be significant during operation of the development whilst only Major effects, as a result of their temporary nature, are considered significant during construction. Effects ranging from moderate to negligible are not considered significant.
- 2.40 The anticipated short and long terms effects on the landscape and visual resources are assessed within the context of the existing Landscape Masterplan. These then provide the basis for mitigation measures which are incorporated into the layout. Residual impacts are described in Section 12 under Anticipated Residual Effects so as to demonstrate any long term limitations of the proposals. Finally, conclusions are drawn and a professional opinion given as to the site's capacity for change.

REPORTING

- 2.41 For the purposes of this report where text is shown in bold this has been done by the author to highlight key / relevant points from other documents. Where in italics, these are direct quotes from other relevant documents.

CONSULTATIONS

- 2.42 Draft viewpoints were agreed with Rochdale Council during pre application discussions for Unit D (which at the time also included the construction of Unit B). Concerns raised by Rochdale Council in their Pre Application response (dated 23rd July 2020) have also been considered as part of this assessment. These concerns relate to the potential adverse impacts on landscape and views that may be experienced in open, green belt areas located to the west of the site. During a site survey, a thorough walkover of the study area was undertaken by the project landscape architect to determine the visual envelope. As a result of this scoping exercise, viewpoints were subsequently added, removed or viewpoint locations amended to better account for the visibility towards the site.

LIMITATIONS

- 2.43 No technical difficulties were encountered in carrying out the visual assessment presented in this document.
- 2.44 Practical problems encountered during the on site visual assessment included inaccessibility of some sections of PRow. This was predominantly due to a lack of use which had resulted in sections becoming overgrown. Also, at the time of visiting, works aligned with Pilsworth Road were in progress and access to PRow Hey FP75 was restricted by heras fencing. In these instances, representative viewpoints were selected based on proximity to the PRow (see VP1).
- 2.45 The GLVIA3 guidance suggests that consideration be given to seasonal variation in effects where appropriate but acknowledges that the timing of the assessment may mean that this is not practical (p112, para 6.28). In this LVIA we adopt an approach that where there would be potentially differences between seasonal views, this would be indicated in the assessment and taken into consideration in reaching conclusions.
- 2.46 This LVIA is for a full planning application. Further details on the appearance of the proposed built development and the associated detail of the landscape treatments will be provided by Fletcher Rae (the project architect) and Urban Wilderness.

SECTION A - 3: DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The proposed application site is located within Birch Business Park, Heywood (See Figure 2). Birch Business Park is 15.6 hectares in size and is a major developed site, accommodating a number of buildings of varying age and size. The majority of buildings have B2 (General Industrial) or B8 (Storage and Distribution) consent and include large areas of hard standings which facilitate on plot parking and loading areas for heavy goods vehicles. Birch Business Park is allocated as a site for employment uses, as part of South Heywood Employment Area within the Rochdale Core Strategy (adopted October 2016).
- 3.2 See Figure 3 for the proposed General Arrangement of Unit B produced by Fletcher Rae Architects, September 2021. This masterplan has been developed with consideration of comments raised by planning case officers and the landscape strategy has been developed to meet the aspirations and requirements as set out within the Pre Application response received back from Rochdale Borough Council, dated 23 July 2020.
- 3.3 The proposed development measures 2.01 hectares and is wholly located within the clearly defined curtilage of Birch Business Park.
- 3.4 The development of the site proposes the erection and construction of the following:

UNIT B:

- The erection of a new industrial unit;
- The construction of a new service yard with 3 loading doors bays and 6 levels access loading doors.
- 7 trailer parking spaces.
- The construction of 89 parking spaces, including 5 accessible parking bays.
- The construction of internal access roads.
- The erection of a new sound barrier which is to be aligned with the site boundary along Moss Hall Road.
- New landscape including; tree planting, shrub planting, hedgerows, species rich grassland and mown grass.

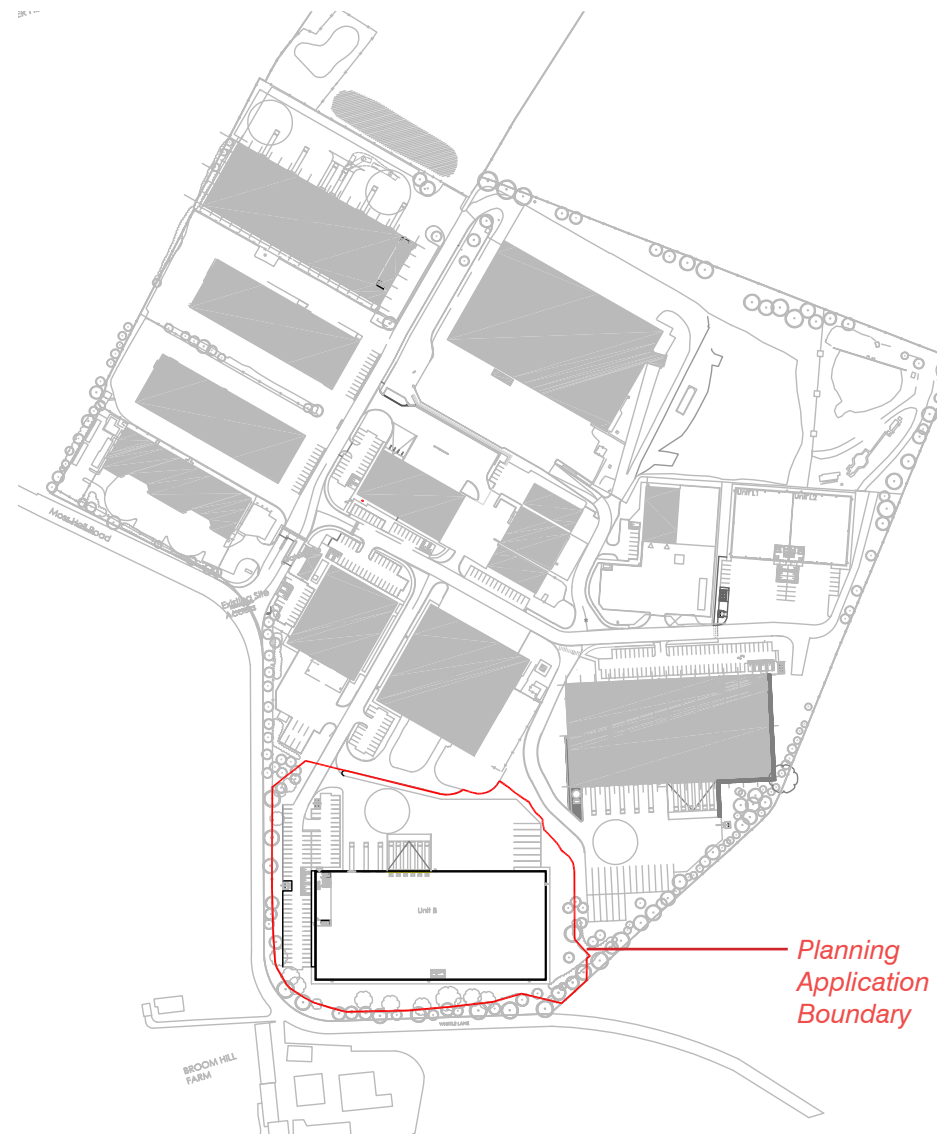


FIGURE 2: Birch Business Park, Proposals in Context



Refer to Dwg No: 21033_PL03 Rev P01

SECTION A - 4: PLANNING CONTEXT

PLANNING POLICY

- 4.1 This section considers the relevant planning and legislative framework in the context of landscape and visual issues. Not all policies are referred to or listed in full but insofar as they are relevant to the proposal and this assessment.

(A) NATIONAL CONTEXT

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK (NPPF 2019)

- 4.2 The NPPF was revised July 2020 and sets out the Government's policy framework within which local and neighbourhood plans are to be developed. These plans, once adopted aim to reflect the needs and priorities of local communities and are to be taken into material consideration in the determination of planning applications that fall within a plan area.

Building a strong, competitive economy (Chapter 6)

- 4.3 "...planning policy should:
- *set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration; and*
 - *set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period.*

Protecting Green Belt land (Chapter 13)

- 4.4 134. Green Belt serves 5 purposes:
- (a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
 - (b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
 - (c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
 - (d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
 - (e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*
- 4.5 149. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:
- (g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:*
 - *Not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or*
 - *Not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.*

THE NATIONAL PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE (NPPG)

- 4.6 The NPPG comprises of an online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. This is part of the Government's reforms to make the planning system less complex and more accessible. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.

Landscape

- 4.7 With regard to landscape, the NPPG describes how planning policies are to be considered to help conserve and enhance landscapes: *"Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.."* (para 036)
- 4.8 The NPPG also provides a brief description of how the likely effects of a development upon the landscape can be assessed:

"To demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment can be used.." (para 036)

(B) LOCAL CONTEXT

ROCHDALE ADOPTED CORE STRATEGY (OCTOBER 2016), ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

- 4.9 The following policies are considered to be relevant in the context of landscape and visual matters:
- 4.10 P1 - Rochdale borough's role in the city region:
- *b. 'Focus employment development so that it supports the overall economic growth of the sub region'*
- 4.11 SP2 - The Spatial Strategy for the borough
- *'In the Manchester fringe, in the south of the borough, where there is good access to existing facilities and infrastructure, the motorway corridor, public transport facilities and the wider Greater Manchester city region we will deliver most new housing, employment and commercial development. We will focus investment, development and improvements on: ...Economic growth corridors / areas'*
- 4.12 SP3 - The Spatial Strategy for the townships
- *'Promote economic growth in South Heywood (SO1,SO2,SO3,SO5) by: Delivering new economic development on sites within the successful employment areas in the south of the town to maintain their national reputation as a high quality business location (Policy E3)'*

Improving design, image and quality of place (SO3)

4.13 P2 - Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

- *Requiring new development to take opportunities to protect and open up important views of hills and valleys which are part of the borough's unique character;*

Promoting a greener environment (SO4)

4.14 G4 - Protecting Green Belt

We will continue to protect from development the following areas of Green Belt:

- *'South of the borough: the urban fringe countryside in the south where its primary role will be to prevent neighbouring towns from merging (i.e. land between the towns of Rochdale, Middleton and Heywood and between those and towns outside the borough)...*
- *'Development will be restricted to those limited types of development which are deemed not to be inappropriate by national planning policies unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated'.*
- *'We will encourage the continued operation of major developed sites in the Green Belt and support limited infilling and redevelopment where this maintains beneficial uses and does not harm the Green Belt'.*
- *'...planning decisions will be monitored and the need for local policies to interpret national Green Belt policy will be considered for inclusion in a future DPD if necessary. The UDP did identify some existing major developed sites in the Green Belt where infilling or redevelopment is permitted. These sites form part of the character of the Green Belt and it is appropriate to maintain these sites in productive use where they can meet employment, housing or other needs in a sustainable way'.*

4.15 G5 - Managing protected open land

- *'Countryside around towns where the focus will be on reclaiming derelict land, woodland planting and improvement, creating and improving paths and cycle networks to link town and country, promoting access to nature, improving flood risk management and maintaining a strong green belt'.*

4.16 G6 - Enhancing green infrastructure

- *'...have regard to local landscape character and contribute to its conservation or enhancement';*
- *'...protect ancient woodlands and hedgerows, support new woodland and tree planting in new developments, and replace removed trees from a site at a ratio of 2:1'*

4.17 G7 - Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity

- *'Countryside around towns - our focus is to protect and enhance the biodiversity interest of river valleys, woodland, water and farmland including the reclamation of derelict and neglected land and flood risk management measures. We will also support actions which enhance public access and enjoyment of countryside close to urban areas including Local Nature Reserves and the wider countryside'.*
- *'Take opportunities to promote biodiversity and create new habitats through new development using landscaping'.*

4.18 P2 - Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

- *a. Requiring new development to integrate successfully with the key natural features of the borough, e.g. river valleys and the Pennine landscape;*
- *b. Requiring new development to take opportunities to protect and open up important views of hills and valleys which are part of the borough's unique character.*

ROCHDALE BOROUGH UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (JUNE 2006).

The Rochdale Employment Land Study concluded that the majority of Employment Zones in the UDP are appropriate for continued employment use and should be retained.

**Chapter 7 Defined Urban Area, Green Belt and Protected Open Land
D/5 Infilling at Major Existing Developed Sites in the Green Belt**

4.19 Limited infilling within the major existing developed sites within the Green Belt identified below ... will be permitted provided that the development:

- a) is related to the continuing use of the site;
- b) is contained within the boundary shown on the Proposal Map;
- c) has no greater impact upon the purposes of including land in the Green Belt than the existing development;
- d) does not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site;
and
- e) does not exceed the height of the existing buildings on site.

4.20 The sites for the purposes of this policy are: ... ii. Birch Industrial Estate

SECTION B - LANDSCAPE

- BASELINE: LANDSCAPE CHARACTER
- BASELINE: THE SITE AND CONTEXT
- ASSESSMENT: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS

SECTION B - 5: Baseline Studies: Landscape Character

INTRODUCTION

5.1 The various elements of a landscape when viewed in combination, including historical and cultural associations, set one landscape apart from another and make its character unique to the people who both live in or visit the area. Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) is a process of critically examining a landscape, recognising 'Character Areas' through the identification of distinctive features. This presents a benchmark from which an assessment of each character area's capacity to accommodate change can be measured.

5.2 There are a number of sources, produced nationally and at the local level, which can help form this benchmark or baseline. Natural England's 'National Character Area Profiles, District-Level Assessment and Townscape Assessment' can help inform the site's landscape baseline. Natural England has coordinated the identification of Landscape Character across England. Together these reflect a division into areas with particular combinations of geology, soil, plants, animals, settlement history, land use, scenery, heritage and culture.

5.3 At a national level the site and its environs falls within NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe.

NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe

National Character Area Profile, Natural England (2014)

5.4 *"Much of the countryside is influenced by recreational use from adjacent urban areas and also by the diversification of farmland. The river valleys, upland hinterland and proximity of urban development all contribute to the area's distinct Pennine fringe character."* (p.3)

5.5 *"The character of the area is shaped by a combination of historical mineral extraction, industrial heritage, some agricultural land and large areas of urban land use; 46 per cent of the Manchester Pennine Fringe is defined as urban, all against a backdrop of the Pennine uplands."* (p.7)

5.6 Key characteristics for this NCA 54 relevant to the site are described as:

- *Transitional zone between elevated, open moorlands and densely populated urban areas on lower ground.*
- *Landform is a transition from upland to lowland, with smooth shoulders of land divided by steep-sided valleys with fast-flowing rivers.*
- *Elevated vantage points provide extensive views across the adjacent Manchester Conurbation NCA.*
- *Fringe area underlain by the Carboniferous Coal Measures rising to the north and east, into the Carboniferous Millstone Grit uplands.*
- *Several rivers flow through the area from the Pennine uplands, linking with adjacent lowland areas.*
- *Woodland cover is characterised by a range of woodland types concentrated along river valleys, as well as some newer community woodlands in the urban areas.*
- *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.*
- *Extensive evidence of 18th- and 19th-century stone and brick-built industrial buildings, including mill lodges and reservoirs originating from the woollen and cotton industries.*

- *Historic trans-Pennine communication routes, especially railways and canals.*
- *Much of the countryside is influenced by recreational use from adjacent urban areas and the diversification of farmland, giving the area a distinct urban fringe character.*
- *High population densities across a belt of industrial towns, with busy transport networks and motorways. Almost half of this NCA is classed as urban.*

5.7 Statements of Environmental Opportunities:

- *SEO 1: Manage, enhance and expand the network of green infrastructure (such as rivers, woodlands, restored industrial sites, parklands and canal routes) within the urban areas, to increase biodiversity, strengthen access and recreational use, and increase understanding of the area's rich industrial heritage, natural heritage and geodiversity. (p.16).*
- *SEO 2: Sustainably manage and enhance the distinctive features of the Pennine fringe landscape, including the predominantly pastoral agricultural land use, the mosaic of farmland and upland fringe habitats, the clough woodland, the drystone walling and the gritstone buildings, to strengthen the landscape character, and improve habitat condition and connectivity, bringing benefits for water quality and reduced soil erosion. (p.18).*
- *SEO 3: Manage and continue to enhance the Manchester Pennine Fringe's characteristic watercourses, such as the fast-flowing rivers and restored canals; conserve and extend the associated riparian habitats, to strengthen their role, extend and link habitats, manage flood risk, improve water quality and reduce soil run-off, and provide opportunities for recreation. (p.19).*
- *SEO 4: Manage existing woodlands and community forests, and extend*

broadleaved woodland cover in appropriate locations, to help mitigate the effects of climate change, improve biodiversity, reduce the impact of new development, and provide access to nature and green infrastructure links into urban areas.(p.20)

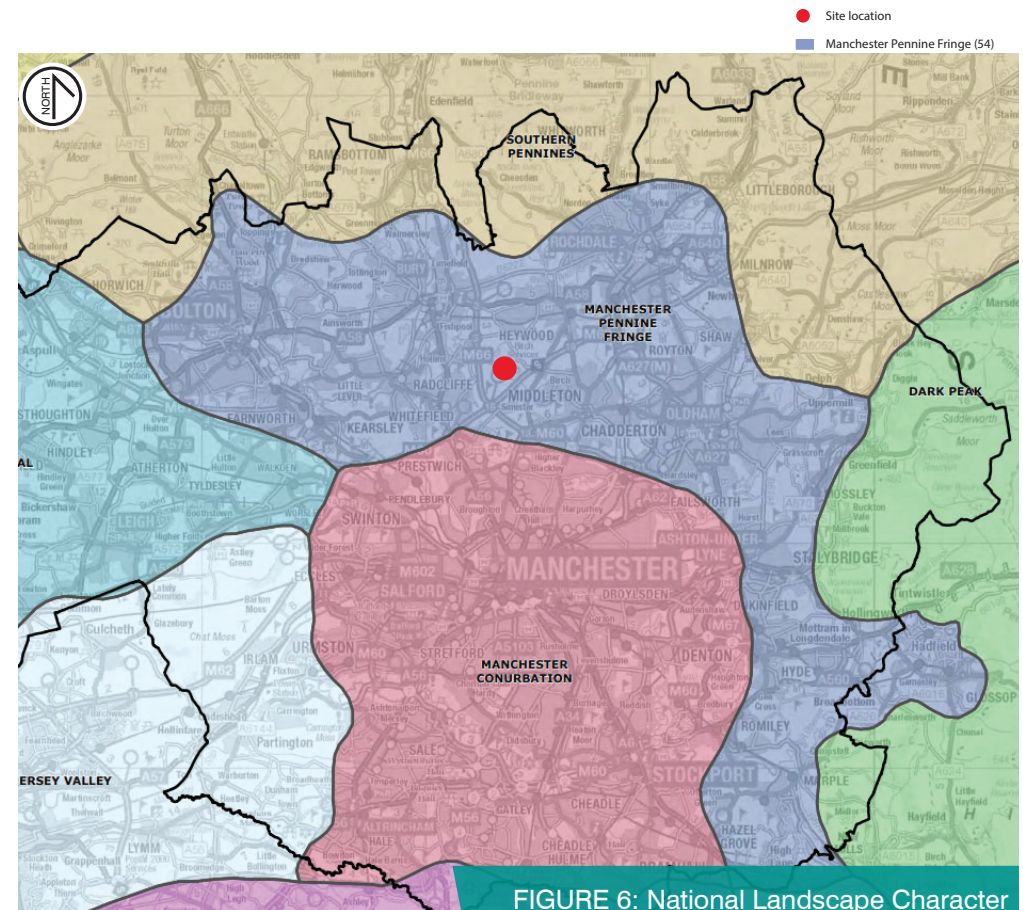


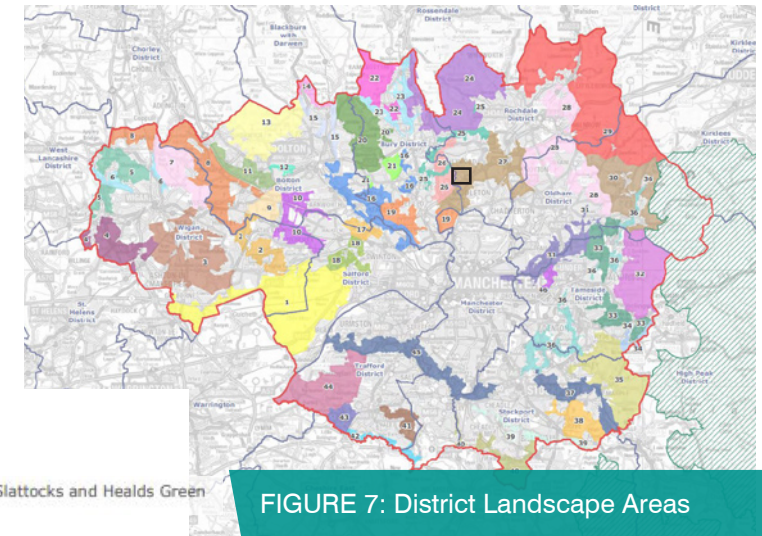
FIGURE 6: National Landscape Character

Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (2018)

Landscape Character Area (LCA)

At a district level, the site sits within the character area of: LCA 27: Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green.

- 5.8 LCA 27: Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green is judged to have moderate sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development.
- *The urban farmland between Heywood and Middleton is judged to have a moderate sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development (in addition to the housing scenario) as it lies adjacent to and contains existing large industrial development (Birch Business Park and Stakehill Industrial & Distribution Park) and is crossed by large road infrastructure such as the M62 and A627(M) which have a strong influence, detracting from the rural qualities of the landscape.*



Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (2018), Prepared by: LUC
Broad Location of site marked in red

Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (2018)

Landscape Character Types (LCT)

- 5.9 At a district level, the site sits within the character type of Urban Fringe Farmland with the wider study areas also including Mosslands and Lower Farmland and Incised Urban Fringe Valleys (as Shown in Figure 7).

Urban Fringe Farmland

- 5.10 The landscape character type of Urban Fringe Farmland is described as:

- 5.11 Topography, Geology and Drainage

- *Rolling landscape with elevation ranging between 30 and 250m AOD.*
- *Elevated farmland to the north and east, close to the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills, mainly comprising undulating hills and valleys.*
- *Landform dissected by narrow, often steep sided wooded cloughs, and drained by a network of streams and ponds (of local ecological value) throughout.*
- *Underlying bedrock geology at higher elevations dominated by Pennine Coal Measures mudstones, siltstones and sandstones.*
- *Glacial till and fluvial deposits overlay the bedrock, creating the rolling landform.*

- 5.12 Land use and field patterns

- *Variable land use, with the more elevated land in the north and east typified by lower grade agricultural land used for dairy farming, horse grazing and sheep rearing. Pockets of dry heath, acid grassland and moorland fringe are also present.*

- *Pastoral land characterised by small and medium sized fields, forming various patterns from rectilinear to distinctive web shaped originating from Parliamentary enclosure.*
- *Field boundaries comprise often gappy, species-poor hedgerows with occasional established clumps of hedgerow trees. Post and wire fencing replaces hedges in many locations, whilst occasional stone walls provide definition at higher elevations, but many are in a degraded condition.*
- *Frequent recreational land uses with sports fields and golf courses located close to the urban edge. The manicured lush greens of the courses contrast sharply with areas of semi-improved grazing land.*
- *The open farmland contrasts strongly with adjoining residential and industrial urban areas, often forming a rural buffer to the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills.*

- 5.13 Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- *Open landscape with sparse woodland cover generally limited to isolated plantation woodland, hedgerows and the steep cloughs that bisect the rolling farmland.*
- *A small number of Ancient Woodlands provide important habitats and wildlife corridors.*
- *Established clumps of hawthorn and dog rose line some of the field boundaries and highways, with some incorporating mature broadleaved trees.*
- *Other SBI-designated habitats include areas of dry heath, acid and of species rich grassland.*

5.14 Archaeology and cultural heritage

- *The landscape also forms part of the setting to a number of other Conservation Areas on its doorstep.*
- *Grade II Listed Buildings sparsely scattered throughout.*

5.15 Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- *Generally a dispersed pattern of scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings constructed of locally sourced gritstone. Occasional small settlements are linked by local roads and winding country lanes.*
- *In some areas settlement takes the form of 20th century ribbon development strung along roads. Some industrial development and distribution parks are also located close to major roads.*
- *A network of major road and rail routes, including the M62, M61 and A627(M) motorways, form dominant features with extensive cuttings, embankments, bridges and junctions.*
- *Numerous rights of way and cycle routes permeate the landscape, linking to the surrounding urban areas. The Rotary Way and Rochdale Way are long distance footpaths connecting to the local network.*

5.16 Views and perceptual qualities

- *In general, the more elevated, rolling farmland has an exposed and open character with little sense of enclosure and strong visual connections with surrounding landscapes.*
- *Views within the floodplains are typically restricted by hedgerows, hedgerow trees and development, creating a more enclosed landscape with pockets of seclusion and relative tranquillity.*
- *Wide panoramic views from high points over the Greater Manchester conurbation contained within a bowl dramatically flanked by the South/ West Pennines*

- *Historic mills with tall chimneys and warehouses also form landmarks on the skyline.*
- *Transport corridors and pylon lines are very apparent, with the lack of tree cover within the rolling open farmland leaving the large roads and motorway visually exposed and audible.*

Incised Urban Fringe Valleys

5.17 The landscape character type of Incised Urban Fringe Valley is described as:

5.18 Topography, geology and drainage

- *Typically narrow, incised valleys cutting through rolling hills which include the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills (where the enclosing landform rises to around 300m AOD).*
- *Upstream the rivers and tributaries are typically narrow and fast flowing, forming steep sided V-shape valleys and gorges. Further downstream the rivers widen and meander across flatter valley bottoms.*
- *Underlying bedrock geology dominated by Pennine Coal Measures, comprising mudstones, siltstones and sandstones topped by fluvial deposits. Bedrock strata are exposed in places due to fluvial erosion.*
- *Small tributary cloughs formed by seasonal streams flowing straight down valley sides, characterised by fast-moving streams, pools and falls.*

5.19 Land use and field patterns

- *The valleys cut through thick glacial deposits supporting lower quality, in places poorly draining farmland.*
- *Small to medium pastoral fields and horse paddocks on the valley sides and areas of wet grassland and scrub along the valley floor. Some arable fields are found on the drier, flatter ground on the valley floors.*

- *Semi-regular fields of 19th century origin marked by (often gappy) hedgerows and post-and-wire fencing. Areas of arable farmland include agglomerated 20th century fields. There are rare examples of medieval strip fields around settlements.*
- *Dry stone walls (some in a state of disrepair) delineate pastures on higher slopes, reflecting the character of nearby upland foothill landscapes.*
- *A significant amount of the land with the valleys is used for recreation with amenity grassland associated with golf courses, frequent playing fields and Country Parks.*
- *Other land uses include utility infrastructure with numerous reservoirs and water treatment works, flood alleviation schemes, industrial development, and large electricity substations.*

5.20 Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- *Valleys typically traced by riparian woodland with banks of dense broadleaved woodland (some ancient), distinctive moss-covered trees and a wildflower-rich understorey.*
- *Woodland and areas of parkland create important wildlife corridors between densely populated urban areas, with significant areas designated as Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and managed as Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).*
- *Post-industrial and reclaimed land at various stages of regeneration, with locally valued mosaics of scrub, herbaceous vegetation and reedbeds. These include LNRs at Moses Gate Country Park, Clifton Country Park, Glodwick Lows¹ and Reddish Vale Country Park.*

5.21 Archaeology and cultural heritage

- *The valleys have a long industrial heritage as a power source for the 19th and 20th century cotton industry. Rivers are often flanked by large, sometimes derelict, mills built of gritstone or red brick with tall chimneys forming distinctive skyline features.*

5.22 Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- *Modern and historical industrial complexes, recreational buildings, scattered farmsteads and small settlements connected by winding lanes. Some steeper areas are inaccessible by road.*
- *The valleys are typically overlooked adjacent urban areas, with some redevelopment sites for housing located on exposed ridges, emphasising their close proximity to densely populated areas.*
- *Major rail and road routes, including the M60, M66, M67 and M6 cross and run partly through some of the valleys. These linear features incorporate extensive cuttings, embankments, bridges and junctions.*
- *Networks of footpaths criss-cross the valleys. Some are formal public rights of way; others simply desire lines running from the surrounding urban areas.*

5.23 Views and perceptual qualities

- *Views are typically contained by the steep valley sides and woodland. From the more elevated locations along the valley sides there are views to the surrounding Pennine uplands (including the Peak District National Park) and over Greater Manchester.*
- *Major transport infrastructure can sever the valleys' visual unity, influence local views and break perceptions of tranquillity and the small landform scale. Large pylons frequently dominate views.*
-

Mossland and Lower Farmland

5.24 The landscape character type of Mossland and Lower Farmland is described as:

5.25 Topography, geology and drainage

- *Landform generally flat or gently undulating, with elevation generally ranging from 0-30 metres AOD. on the edge of Unsworth (Bury).*

- *Underlying bedrock geology of Coal Measures (mudstones, siltstones, sandstones) overlain by fluvioglacial sands and gravels with pockets of peat and clay.*
- *Floodplain landscape, often poorly drained, with numerous brooks, occasional small reservoirs and a large number of ponds, flashes and ditches.*
- *Soil quality is variable; restored agricultural land typically has thin, sandy, poorly drained soils (Grade 3 or Grade 4) whereas areas of reclaimed mossland have rich, peaty soils, some of which are of high agricultural productivity (Grade 1 or Grade 2).*

5.26 Land use and field patterns

- *Land use largely reclaimed lowland farmland, mainly arable but with some pasture, interspersed with distinctive areas of remnant mossland.*
- *Areas of lowland farmland have a pattern of medium to large scale fields, generally defined by gappy hedgerows, with few hedgerow trees.*
- *The mosslands are a simple, ordered landscape divided geometrically into a series of small to large sized fields with deep, open drainage ditches as field boundaries, interspersed with moss woodlands. Field are of post medieval 18th, 19th and 20th century origin.*
- *Some recreational provision including golf courses.*

5.27 Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover

- *Remnant mosslands and large geometric moss woodlands are an important nature conservation resource, and many are locally designated as Sites of Biological Interest (SBI).*
- *In lowland farmland areas there are small pockets of woodland, either on small steep-sided valleys, along motorway edges or associated with settlement edges. Areas of willow and alder carr fringe wetlands, which include ponds, flashes and ditches.*
- *Farmland is drained by narrow brooks...*

5.28 Archaeology and cultural heritage

- *Urban expansion and past widespread coal extraction has resulted in a fragmentation of the mosslands. Remnant spoil heaps and former railway corridors are now important for wildlife and recreation.*

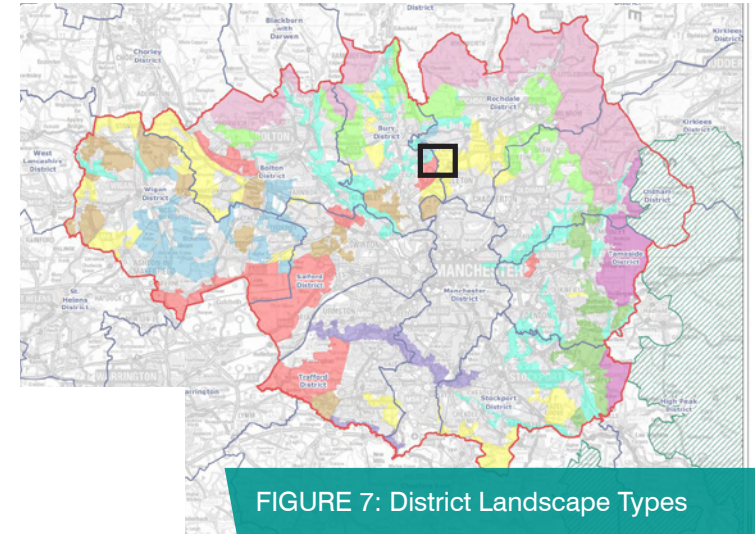
5.29 Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- *In lowland farmland areas, settlement comprises small villages along country lanes, and scattered farmhouses.*
- *In the mosslands, farm buildings are located along the long, straight lanes at the edge of the mosses.*
- *Straight lanes known as 'rides' are often higher than the mossland (due to peat shrinkage), and are sometimes emphasised by trees and scrub.*
- *Parts of the landscape are influenced by large scale industrial and commercial development, housing, motorway corridors and railway lines e.g. large scale commercial development at Middlebrook (Bolton), Heywood (Rochdale), M60 at Clifton Moss (Bolton/Salford). There is also evidence of past mineral and extractive industries.*
- *Public footpaths tend to run along field boundaries...*

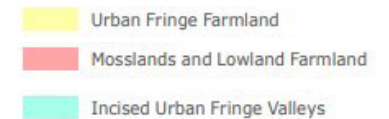
5.30 Views and perceptual qualities

- *Views tend to be internal due to the flat or gently undulating, low-lying nature of the land, with surrounding development often forming the backdrop. Overhead lines form prominent vertical elements*
- *Some distant views from elevated areas of farmland*
- *Some wide, sweeping views across mossland areas are available from local high points, e.g. motorway flyovers and bridges over canals.*

- The mosslands have a sense of remoteness, with few buildings and roads in poor condition, some of which terminate in dead ends. Mists and fogs are common on cooler nights. The sense of remoteness can be perceived as unsettling.
- Motorways are audibly and visually dominant in some areas, reducing tranquillity e.g. the M61 at Chew Moor and the M62 at Irlam/Barton.



Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (2018), Prepared by: LUC
Broad Location of site and study area marked in red



SECTION B - 6: Baseline Studies: Landscape and Context

INTRODUCTION

- 6.1 The following section describes the existing prevailing conditions within the site and its immediate landscape context. A study area of 2.5km buffer from the proposed site has been established to assess the landscape and surrounding context. Viewpoints and their associated receptors were also assessed within this identified study area.

Settlement, Infrastructure and The Wider Context

- 6.2 The M62 runs in an east to west direction at approximately 0.5km to the south of the Business Park. Beyond the M62 cuttings are agricultural fields which provide an undeveloped buffer between the M62 and the northern extent of the town of Middleton
- 6.3 The large-scale Pilsworth Quarry, Heywood Distribution Park and Broad Field Industrial Park lie approximately 0.7km north of the site, converging and extending in a north to north east direction. Beyond this industrial setting is the main urban area of Heywood, which is located approximate 1.75 km to the north east of the site.
- 6.4 The urban edge of Hopwood (an area of Heywood) is located approximately 1.5km to the east of the site.
- 6.5 The M66 runs in a north to south direction approximate 1km to the west of the site. Beyond this elevated section of motorway is Pilsworth, Bury Golf Course and urban areas of Hollins, Sunnybank and Unsworth, which are all outer lying conurbations of Bury.
- 6.6 Industry is a common feature within the landscape and is prominently associated with the areas culture and landscape character. This is in part due to good access to the M62 and M66 and the redevelopment of historical industrial plots located within close proximity to the Rochdale Canal and River Roch. There are a large number of existing industrial / business parks situated within the

vicinity, including; Heywood Business Park, Hareshill Business Park, Pilsworth Industrial Estate, Yeagate Industrial Estate, Waterfold Business Park, Pimhole Business Park, Junction 19 Industrial Park, Phoenix Close Industrial Estate, Lemon Park Industrial Park and Transpennine Industrial Park to name but a few. Birch Business Park is allocated as a site for employment uses, as part of South Heywood Employment Area within the Rochdale Core Strategy (adopted October 2016).

- 6.7 Agriculture is also a common feature of the landscape and is also prominently associated with the areas culture and landscape character. This is characterised by small and medium sized fields, forming various patterns which are predominantly neutral grassland used for stock rearing. The majority of non-developed land within the study area is agricultural fields within the Rochdale and Bury Green Belts. Other areas of open space include Pike Fold Golf Club and Bury Golf Club.

Topography & Hydrology

- 6.8 See Figure 8 for Topography. The site sits between 122m AOD at its eastern most extent, rising to circa 130 AOD in the east.
- 6.9 The broad topography of wider landscape is gently sloping from east to west until west of Whittle Lane, where the decline increases and landform drops from circa 130mAOD to circa 90m AOD at Pike Fold Golf Club and the M66. Similarly, landform slopes from higher ground to the north of the site, within the urban area of Heywood at circa 135m AOD to Circa 108, AOD, south of the M62 at the most northern point of Middleton. This general lay of the land is incised with a number of local valleys, undulating fields and scrapes which are generally focused around water channels, namely; Brightly Brook, Whittle Brook and Castle Brook.

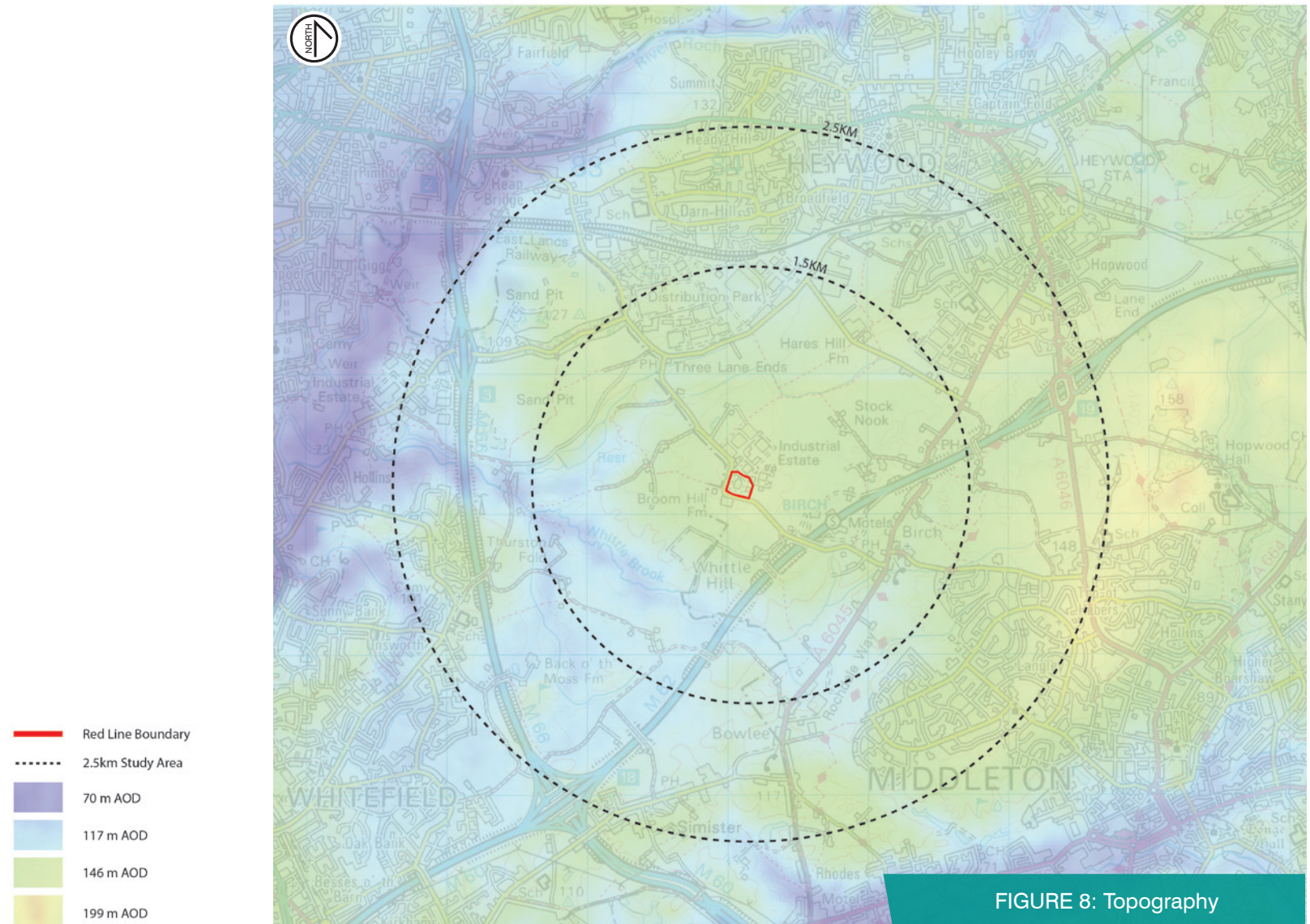


FIGURE 8: Topography

- 6.10 The proposed site is not within a flood zone.

Existing Vegetation

- 6.11 The nature of the site results in an area that is largely devoid of vegetation. Vegetation that does exist is limited to defining the boundary of the site to provide a degree of separation between the business park and surrounding areas. Trees line the full perimeter of the site, increasing in density and maturity along Whittle Lane at the south west corner of the site. Species noted on site included: *Alder*, *Acer*, *Betula*, *Cupressus × leylandii*, *Larix*, *Prunus* and *Sorbus*.
- 6.12 There are a number of tree groups across the study area. These are typically focused on defining ownership boundaries, although there are a number of tree groups also focused around water channels; namely Whittle Brook. Similarly, the major transport routes of the M62 and M66 feature substantial tree planting to their sidings, particularly around Junctions 18 and 19 and also surrounding and within Pikes Golf Club.
- 6.13 Aside from this, vegetation throughout the wider study area is limited to field margins which consist of hedgerows, some of which are consistent but most of which are gappy with occasional hedgerow trees.

Public Rights Of Way (PRoW)

- 6.14 See Figure 9 for Public Rights of Way (PRoW). There are numerous public footpaths that run adjacent to the site.
- 6.15 Public footpaths to the north, east and south east of the site fall within the boundary of Rochdale Council and include: FP72, FP74, FP75 and FP142. These public footpaths connect into each other, as well as connecting to further public footpaths including FP73 and BP71. This network of footpaths provides an interconnected network linking the site to Heywood, Heywood Distribution Park and to Manchester Road which goes on to provide connections with Middleton.

- 6.16 Public footpaths to the west of the site fall within the control of Bury Council and include: 2WHI, 3WHI, 4WHI, 5WHI, 6WHI, 7WHI and 8WHI. To the north west a series of footpaths run through Pilsworth Quarry including: 82BUR, 74BUR and 79BUR.

- 6.17 Collectively the public footpaths surrounding the site provide a comprehensive network of routes throughout the agricultural and industrial landscape.

Statutory and Non-statutory designations

- 6.18 All related designations within the study area are mapped on Figure 10. The site does not include any landscape designations, statutory and non-statutory, at either a national or local level. Therefore, in the context of the NPPF, it is not considered that the site comprises of 'a highly valued landscape' (NPPF footnote 9) as characterised by, for example, sites designated for their wildlife value (under the Birds and Habitats Directives or Sites of Special Scientific Interest), or sites designated for their beauty or for the preservation of settlement identity (such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coast, National Parks or Green Belt).
- 6.19 Hollin Vale Local Nature Reserves (LNR) falls within the 2.5km radius of the study area. However, the LNR is physically and visually separated from the site by the elevated M66 motorway.

Scheduled Ancient Monuments

- 6.20 There are no Scheduled Monuments within the site or study area.

Listed Buildings

- 6.21 Within the 2.5km study area, there are 7 Grade II Listed buildings. Unsworth War Memorial, The Church of St George, The Fountain Horse Trough to North of White Hart Inn and the Birch In Hopwood War Memorial are all separated from the site by the M62 and M66 transport corridors.

- Red Line Boundary
- - - 2.5 KM Study Area
- ... PROW- Footpaths
- ... PROW- Bridleway
- ... Restricted Byway

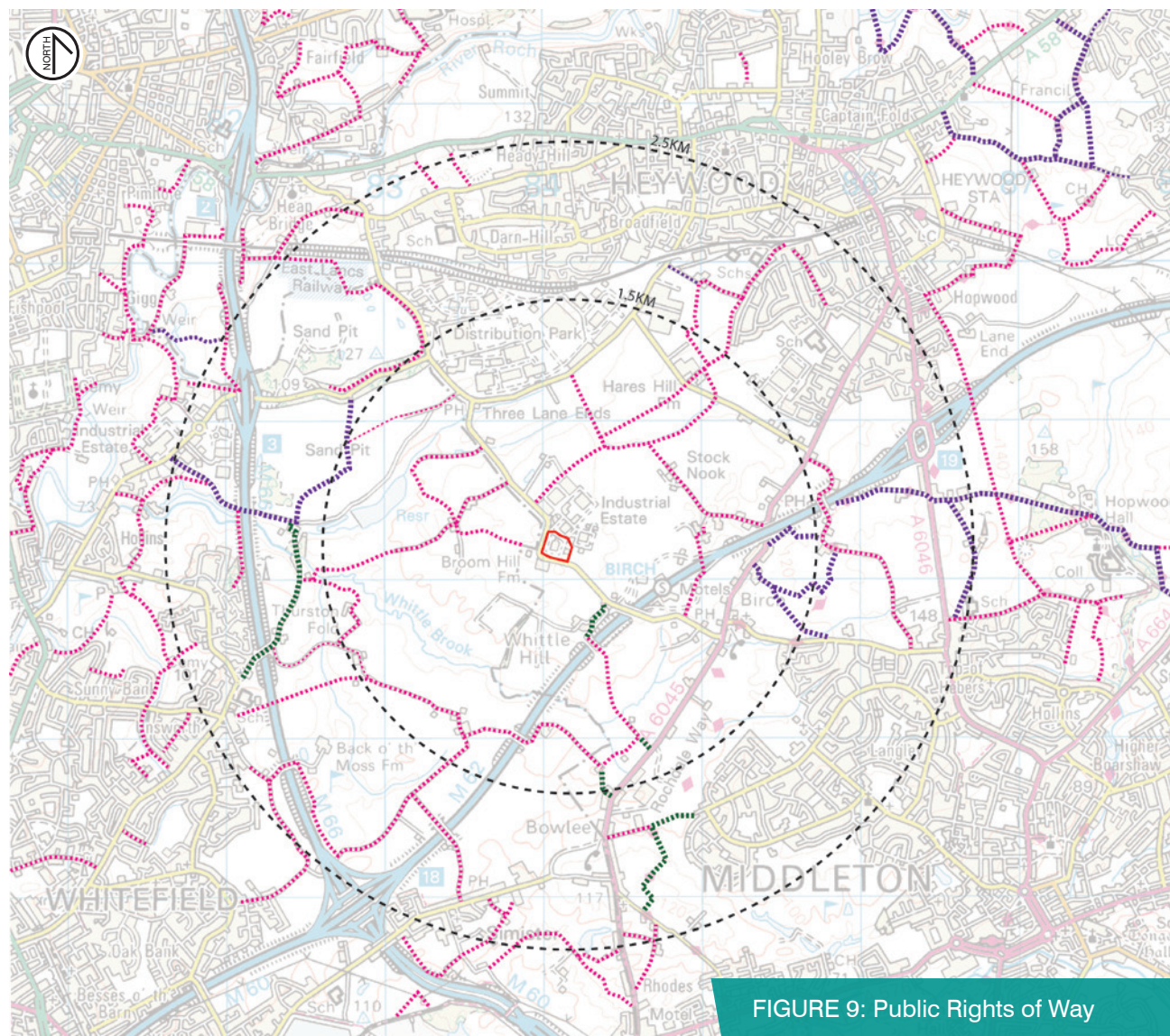


FIGURE 9: Public Rights of Way

6.22 Brick House Farm lies approximate 1.3km to the west of the site, Lower Whittle Farmhouse lies approximately 0.57km to the south east of the site and Edgecroft lies approximate 1.7 north east of the site. Each of these listed assets is separated from the site by intervening landform, tree groups or existing built form.

Green Belt

6.23 The site is located within parcel BU_ BA02 of the Rochdale Green Belt which merges with the Bury Green Belt to the west of the site, as shown on Figure 10. The Green Belts encompass the site providing separation and open space between the urban areas of Heywood, Middleton and Unsworth and the transport corridors of the M62 and M66. The Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment identifies that the Green Belt in this location plays a strong role in preventing neighboring towns from merging into one another and plays a moderate role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

LANDSCAPE VALUE

6.24 In terms of Landscape Value, the site is not subject to any National or Regional designations as shown in the Planning Designation (Figure 10). The application site is therefore considered to be local in scale and, as such, it is appropriate to assess the Site's landscape value and immediate context in terms of the guidelines set out in Box 5.1 of the GLVIA3 (page 84 GLVIA) and Table 1 of the methodology set out in Section 2 of this report.

6.25 Condition / Landscape Quality: The proposed site is currently utilised for industrial use with large scale, prefabricated distribution warehouses and light industry. External areas are predominantly formed from large areas of hard standing. The site is not designated for its beauty or quality. There are no PRow running through the site and all existing footpaths that surround the site are proposed to be retained as existing. Existing boundary trees are to be retained and supplemented with new tree and shrub planting. Overall, the site considered to be of low quality and condition.

6.26 Scenic Quality: The Site is partially enclosed by boundary planting but has many areas that lack planting structure or height that enables the buildings to exert an industrial influence upon the character of the local landscape. Large HGV vehicles associated with the business park are also a regular feature within the landscape, accessing the site via Moss Hall Road and Whittle Lane.

6.27 Rarity and Representativeness: The site largely comprises industrial buildings and large areas of hard standing and is not considered special by way of designation. The study areas features small and medium sized fields, forming various patterns which are predominantly neutral grassland used for stock rearing. Golf courses are also a representative feature of the Landscape Character Area and Bury Green Belt but are not considered to be rare or unusual. This is a landscape which contains characteristic, but not unique, landscape types or features and as such is considered Medium in terms of rarity and representativeness.

6.28 Conservation Interests: There are no conservation interest on the site. There is a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) at Hollin Vale, approximate 2km west of the site. However, the LNR is physically and visible separated from the site and the perceived landscape context by the elevated M66.

6.29 Recreation Value: There are recreational provisions within the study area by way of an extensive network of PRow which surround the site. These routes will not be affected by the development of the site and will still serve to connect users to the wider path network. Birch Business Park conveys an unavoidable urbanising effect on the character of the routes when walking within close proximity to the site, which will remain an influence upon the completion of the proposed development. However, this impact can be partially mitigated through planting along the southern site boundary.

6.30 Pikes Fold Golf Club is approximate 1.5km south west of the site. Proposals are likely to have only a minimal effect on the future amenity value of the golf course given the distance to site, exposure to the wider landscape setting and intervening features such as trees, landform and occasional buildings. Similarly, Bury Golf Course which lies approximately 2.5km west of the site is not expected to experience any effects on the future amenity as the course is physically separated from the landscape context by the M66.

6.31 Perceptual Aspects: Overall the landscape has a sense of openness but it is difficult to feel completely removed from the industrial influence that is exerted over the landscape by the surrounding commercial estates and road networks. However, the combination of field patterns with their hedged boundaries, occasional tree groups and the character of sloping landform with locally incised valley's serves to convey a minor sense of remoteness and occasional tranquility.

- Red Line Boundary
- Local Nature Reserve
- Felling Woodland Agreement
- Registered Park and Garden
- Flood zone 2 and 3
- Green Belt (Rochdale)
- Green Belt (Bury)
- Green Belt (Manchester)
- PROW: Footpaths
- PROW: Bridleway
- Restricted By Way
- Grade II Listed Buildings

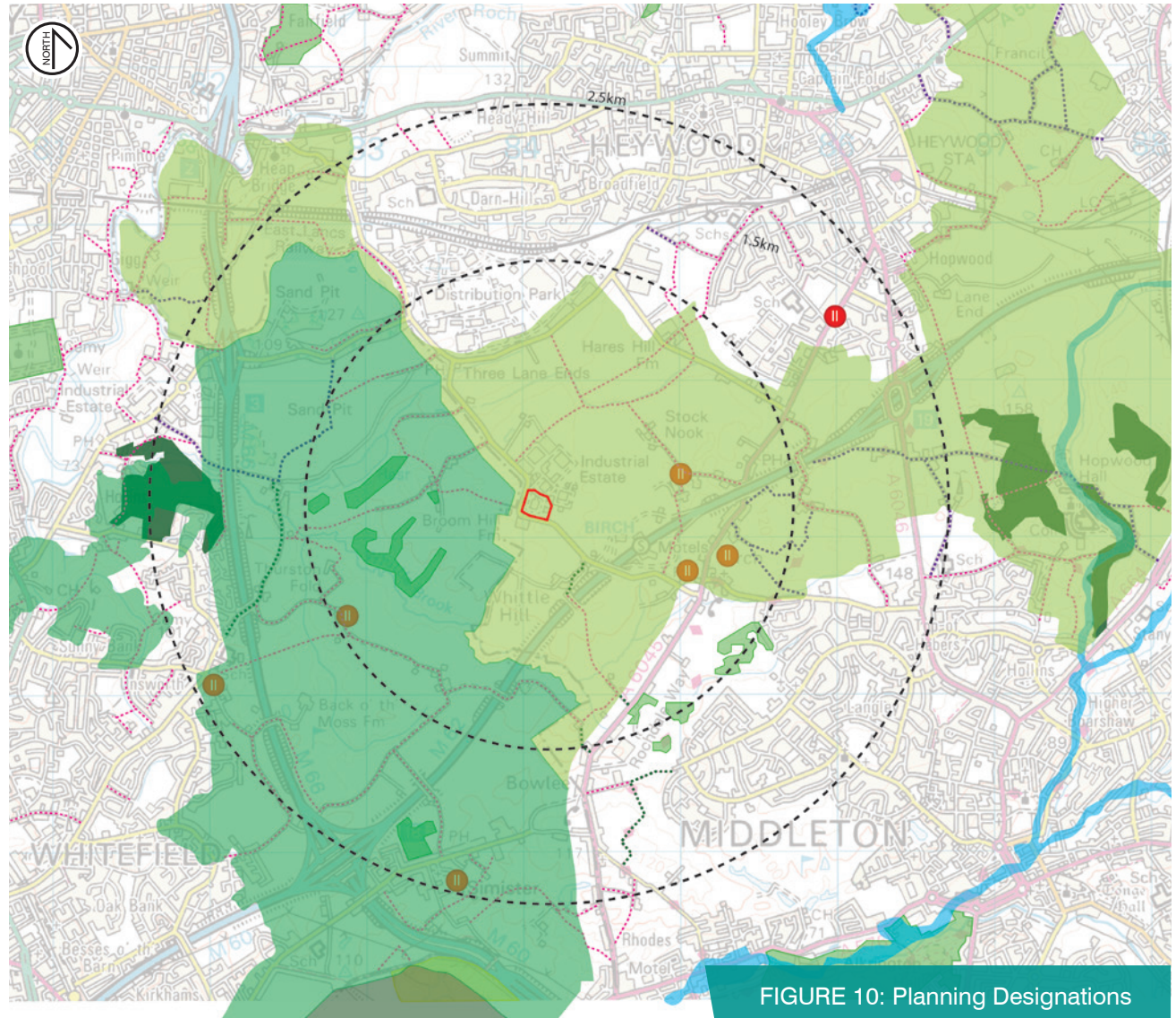


FIGURE 10: Planning Designations

- 6.32 Overall, there are small parts of the study area are considered to retain moderate perceptual values (wildness/ tranquility etc) although the majority of the study area is influenced by road noise and activities from the surrounding commercial properties. Therefore, it is considered to have a Medium value in terms of tranquility or remoteness.
- 6.33 Cultural Associations: There are no cultural associations identified for the site.
- 6.34 Summary: Whilst practically every landscape is valued by those who live nearby, or is enjoyed by those who walk its footpaths etc, this landscape is neither rare nor unique, being representative of the wider area and in fair overall condition. Given the evaluation provided above, the site is considered to have a Medium overall landscape value at a local level. However, the '*Strong*' value placed on the landscape in terms of its role of preventing the coalescence of nearby towns and of the '*Moderate*' value in preventing development from encroaching into the countryside, the landscape is considered to be of High value.

LANDSCAPE SUSCEPTIBILITY

- 6.35 In terms of the development proposals identified in Section A, it is clear that the development of the site within Birch Business Park will not result in any significant effects upon the wider landscape resource. The redevelopment will occur wholly within the existing curtilage of the business park boundary and will therefore not compromise the functionality or perceptions of the Green Belt.
- 6.36 As previously noted, the presence of existing commercial buildings already exerts an influence over the landscape, which along with the presence of major road infrastructure and the movement of HGV's has set a precedent of the landscape being associated with large commercial premises.

- 6.37 The development proposes to replace existing commercial buildings which further reduces the susceptibility of the landscape given that there is already a commercial / industrial presence.
- 6.38 Given the site's existing use, the landscape's susceptibility to change of the type proposed is reduced as the development will not give rise to new characteristics. All proposed development is proposed to be within the curtilage of the business park and will therefore not encroach further into the green. Susceptibility is therefore considered to be Low.

LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY

- 6.39 The Rochdale Green Belt encompasses the site and is judged to be of strong value in its role of preventing the coalescence of nearby towns and of moderate value in preventing development from encroaching into the countryside.
- 6.40 When the Local Landscape value of High is combined with a Landscape susceptibility value of Low, the resulting Landscape Sensitivity subsequently carries a value of Medium in terms of the type of changes being proposed.

- Red Line Boundary
- Local Nature Reserve
- Registered Park and Garden
- Flood zone 2 and 3
- Green Belt (Rochdale)
- Green Belt (Bury)
- Green Belt (Manchester)

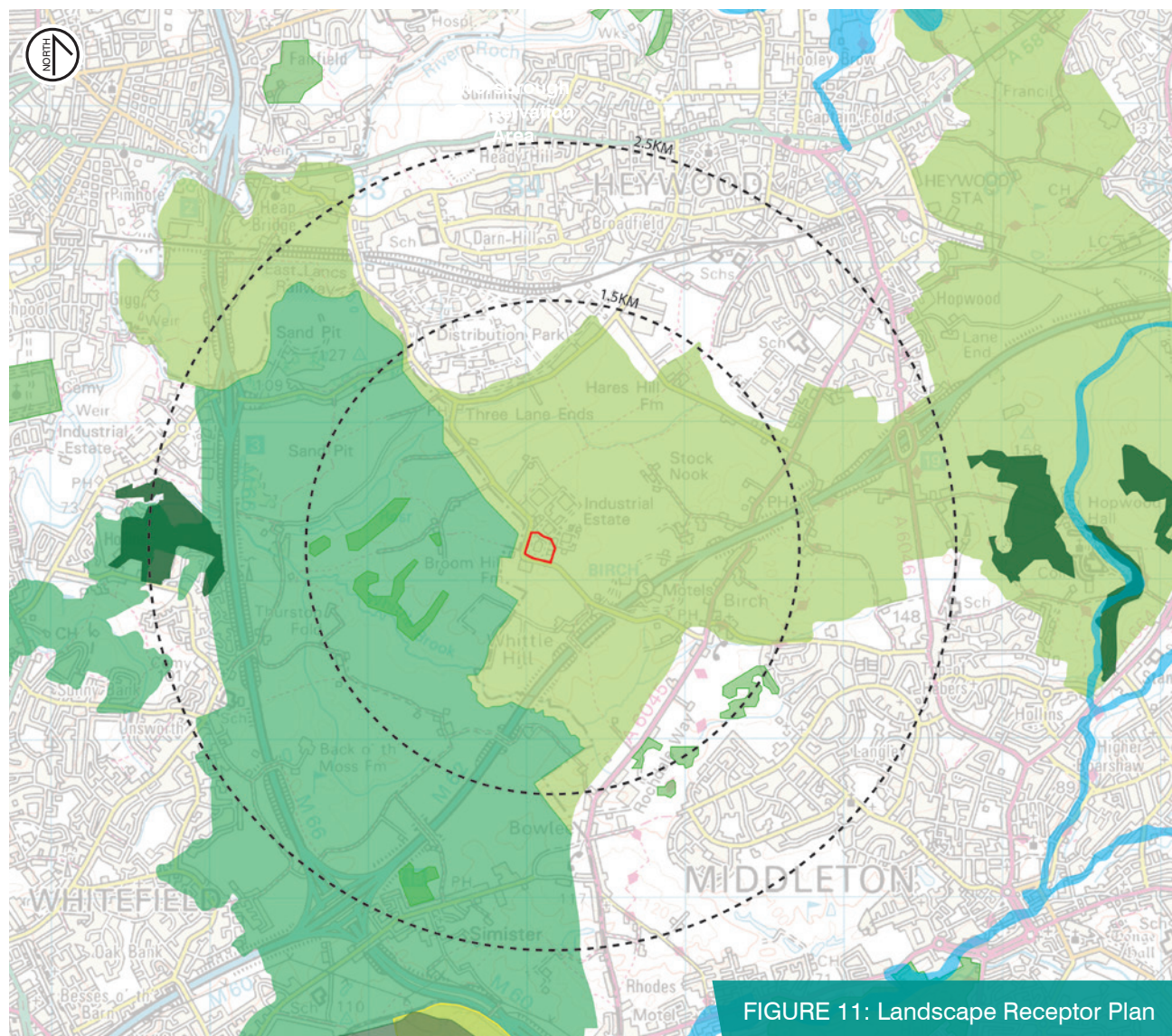


FIGURE 11: Landscape Receptor Plan

SECTION B - 7: Assessment: Landscape Effects

INTRODUCTION

- 7.1 This section considers the landscape effects that would arise as a result of the development.

SHORT TERM EFFECTS

- 7.2 Short term landscape and visual effects would result from alterations to the landscape during the construction of the development. These effects would be temporary and restricted in nature. Effects would be limited to the site and / or off-site highway works associated with modifications to site access and service provision.
- 7.3 Short term landscape and visual effects would result from alterations to the landscape during the construction of the development. These effects would be temporary and restricted in nature. Effects would be limited to the site only.
- 7.4 Key landscape and visual effects resulting from construction include:
- Traffic movements into and out of the site;
 - Views of construction machinery;
 - The demolition of existing buildings;
 - The construction of new buildings, infrastructure and the structural planting of landscape areas; and
 - Lighting associated with construction and security.
- 7.5 Operations that would result in the greatest effects on landscape would be construction noise and vehicle movements which would provide a degree of increased disruption to the landscape and a temporary visual intrusion, especially to receptors in close proximity to the site.

EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER - CONSTRUCTION

- 7.6 National Character Area 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe covers a substantial area and development within the site will only affect a very small part of the NCA. Moreover, effects on the wider landscape is limited due to landform and intervening vegetation. As such, effects on the character of the landscape will be localised to the site and to its immediate context. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed development will result in a Low Adverse magnitude of change to NCA 54 during construction.
- 7.7 Landscape Character Area 27: Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green: Similarly, the site covers only a small part of the LCA. No landscape features are proposed to be removed to facilitate the development or access. As such, it is anticipated that none of the LCA's defining characteristics will be lost. The proposed development is considered to result in a Low Adverse magnitude of change on the LCA.
- 7.8 The Site Itself: Construction activities will exert an influence over the site. Plant movement into and out of the site, coupled with earth-moving and construction activities will cause temporary, increased disruption.
- 7.9 Overall, it is anticipated that the magnitude of change will be Low Adverse and be of Slight significance.

EFFECTS ON LANDSCAPE CHARACTER - OPERATION

- 7.10 Long term effects upon landscape character and resources arising from completion of the scheme will include (but are not limited to):
- A large commercial unit;
 - Service Yard;
 - Substantial commercial scaled lighting;
 - Car Parking;
 - Trailer Parking; and
 - Earthworks and mitigation planting.
- 7.11 These changes would be permanent in nature and would result in a slight change of character the existing commercial / industrial units presently occupying the site.
- 7.12 NCA 54: As with construction impacts, only a very small part of NCA 54 will be affected by the development and no key characteristics will be lost. Operational impacts are considered to be of a Low Adverse magnitude which is therefore considered to result in impacts of Slight Adverse significance.
- 7.13 LCA 27: With regard to impacts at a district level, the character of the LCA will experience only modest changes. As with NCA 54, only a very small part of these LCAs will change. The commercial development will inevitably have a slight increased industrialised effect on the site's landscape character. However, the proposed development will be confined within the curtilage of what is currently developed as industrial land and proposed buildings are to replace existing buildings. Therefore, any additional influence exerted upon the landscape are considered to be minor
- 7.14 Overall, the limited wider intervisibility within the character areas will result in a Low Adverse magnitude which is therefore considered to result in impacts of Slight to Moderate Adverse significance to the Character area as a whole. This is due to no specific components or characteristics of LCA 27 changing, only a more perceived awareness of the existing industrial characteristics.
- 7.15 Green Belt: The contained nature of the proposed development will not exert an influence over the Green Belt that will in anyway prevent it from fulfilling its role of preventing coalescence of neighbouring towns nor the encroachment of urban development into the countryside. However, there will undoubtedly be a perceived increase of industrialisation upon the setting of the Green Belt. Therefore, there are Low Adverse magnitude of change which when coupled with a High sensitivity results in Slight to Moderate significance.
- 7.16 There are no other anticipated effects on the surrounding Statutory and Non-Statutory designation highlighted in Section B - 6 Landscape and Baseline and therefore the proposals are considered to be of Negligible significance.
- 7.17 Woodland: The development will result in an increase of native tree planting along the southern boundary of the site. This will serve to reflect the character found elsewhere of trees defining boundaries and curtilages and will result in an overall assessment of a Low Benefit magnitude of change and a Negligible significance of change.
- 7.18 Landform: The proposed development utilises existing developed land resulting in no change to landform and therefore the proposals are considered to be of Negligible significance.
- 7.19 There are no changes to the Public Rights of Way (PRoW). However, an increase in the scale of the proposed buildings to that of existing building will result in a slightly increased industrialised influence. However, this has to be viewed against the existing baseline of an industrial / business park resulting in a Low Adverse magnitude of change and Slight significance of effects.

SECTION B - 7 Assessment: Landscape Effects

- 7.20 The Site Itself: The site is currently utilised as an industrial / business park. Therefore, the demolition of two buildings to be replaced by a larger building is not considered to be bringing about any changes that are not already experienced. Therefore, it is assessed that overall, the magnitude of change within the site will be Low Adverse and the associated effects to be of Slight significance.
- 7.21 To help mitigate the increase in built form scale, mitigation planting will be used to provide screening and filtering of the unit, to provide a further degree of separation between landscape receptors and the development and to increase the wooded boundary of the site, which is a common characteristic found within the wider landscape.
- 7.22 It is considered that changes within the landscape of the type proposed are unlikely to affect the overall integrity of the wider landscape for two reasons: Firstly, intervisibility could be limited as a result of structural planting along the boundary of the proposed site and secondly, built form, consisting of a large commercial unit is a common feature already within the landscape.
- 7.23 Against the criteria set out in Table 3 of the methodology, it is considered that the site has some ability to accommodate the proposed development without adverse consequences for the retention of the existing landscape baseline or the delivery of landscape planning policies and strategies.' As such, the Application Site has a Low susceptibility to change of the type proposed.

TABLE 8: LANDSCAPE EFFECTS SUMMARY TABLE (OPERATIONAL)

Receptor	Sensitivity to Change	Magnitude of Change	Significance of Change
NCA 54	Low	Low Adverse	Slight Adverse
LCA 27	Low to Medium	Low	Slight to Moderate Adverse
Green Belt	High	Low	Slight to Moderate Adverse
Statutory and Non-statutory designations	Low	No Change	Negligible
Woodland	Moderate	Low Benefit	Negligible
Landform	Low	No Change	Negligible
PRoWs	High	Low Adverse	Slight Adverse
The Site Itself	Low	Low Adverse	Slight Adverse

SECTION C - VISUAL

- BASELINE: VISUAL RECEPTORS
- BASELINE: VIEWS AND VISUAL AMENITY
- ASSESSMENT: VISUAL EFFECTS

SECTION C - 8: Baseline Studies: Visual Receptors

INTRODUCTION

- 8.1 The interaction of urban and rural features within the landscape such as vegetation, landform and buildings determine the potential for views towards the site. This assessment seeks to establish the visibility of the site from a representative sample of surrounding receptors (i.e. people who have a viewing opportunity over or towards the site).
- 8.2 The sensitivity of the viewpoints was evaluated by considering the value attached to specific views and the susceptibility of visual receptor to the type of change arising from the proposed development. The value of a view depends on a variety of considerations including any designations that apply to the view, its contribution to visual amenity and/or its cultural significance. The susceptibility to change of visual receptors depends on the occupation or activity of the receptor and the extent to which their attention is focused on the view and visual amenity.
- 8.3 A baseline analysis of the available views is set out below, with each identified receptor represented on the Viewpoint Location Plan (Figure 13). Viewpoints 1 to 9 have been included within the Assessment section of this report to provide a representative sample of views available to identified receptors. Where appropriate, receptors have been grouped and a representative viewpoint selected to demonstrate visibility.
- 8.4 A photographic survey took place on the 13th August 2021, when vegetation was not in full leaf. The survey was undertaken in clear weather conditions, with good visibility using a Nikon D7200 Digital SLR for all photography. A 35mm focal length was applied. Photographs were taken in accordance with guidance set out in Photography and Photomontage in Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Landscape Institute - Advice Note 01/11.

RECEPTOR SENSITIVITY

- 8.5 Receptors encompass residents, users of Public Rights of Way and views from highways. In overall terms, the first two categories are considered to be of higher sensitivity than the latter due to the prolonged and or proprietary interest in the view, although the context of individual receptors can have a bearing on their sensitivity. The main users or visual receptors are considered in more detail below and individual assessed in Section C 10.
- 8.6 Places of work would have not been assessed since many of the surrounding “places of work” are warehouse style developments, with limited windows and views to the development. We therefore recommend that the following receptor types identified are representative of the visual receptors.

RESIDENTIAL - HIGH SENSITIVITY/MEDIUM SENSITIVITY

- 8.7 Generally, occupiers of residential properties orientated towards the development are classed as being of greater sensitivity (High Sensitivity) and occupiers of properties with distant, oblique views of the development and/or those who are not orientated towards the development are of lesser sensitivity (Medium Sensitivity). An individual assessment of each receptor can be found in Section C 10.

PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW) - HIGH SENSITIVITY

- 8.8 There are numerous PROWs in the surrounding areas. These routes range from well used, well maintained connections to barely discernible routes that appear less used with overgrown vegetation.
- 8.9 Each viewpoint photograph was taken in locations where the proposed site was judged to be the most visible.
- 8.10 People engaged in outdoor recreation whose interest is likely to be focused on the landscape are considered highly sensitive to change of the type proposed.

ROAD USERS - LOW SENSITIVITY

- 8.11 These are considered to be road users driving or cycling along the roads that have been assessed as having obtainable views towards the site. These are; Doctor Fold Way, Whittle Lane and Moss Hall Road. Road user receptors using these routes are classed as being of low sensitivity to change given their proximity to existing industrial development and regular use by heavy goods and agricultural vehicles. Views into the proposed site are, on the whole, fleeting and filtered by intervening vegetation and landform.

VISUAL BASELINE

- 8.12 Visibility towards the site is limited largely to those receptors located in close proximity to the site. The nature of the topography, vegetation, infrastructure and existing buildings limit wider views.
- 8.13 Heywood Distribution Park is situated north of the site and south of the urban area of Heywood. Pilsworth Road which runs across the southern extent of Heywood Distribution Park was walked and no views of Birch business park were identified. There are no views towards the site from further north beyond Pilsworth Industrial Estate.
- 8.14 The M62 corridor runs in an east to west direction approximately 0.5km south of the site. The M62 is a major transport corridor, formed from a cutting, with large sections of verges and embankments well planted with screening vegetation. This corridor, coupled with landform and planted field boundaries prevent any views towards the site from further south. There are very few opportunities to view the site when north of the M62. A number of isolated properties, access tracks and PRowS existing but views to the site are limited due to localised undulations and intervening tree planting. The site generally comes into view when travelling immediately adjacent to the site boundary along Whittle Lane.

- 8.15 Harehills Road runs from Pilsworth Road to Manchester Road approximately 0.95km to the east of the site, beyond which is Broadfield Industrial Park and the main urban area of Hopwood. The site forms part of the view when looking west from Harehills Lane due to the open and undeveloped nature of the Green Belt. Whilst the landscape is relatively free from development, landform is gently undulating which results in occasional screening, with the buildings within the business site coming in and out of view as receptors move along Harehills Lane. These buildings are located in the eastern extent of the business park and are expected to screen the proposed Unit B (which is located in the west).
- 8.16 To the west of the site, landform drops across the open Green Belt to an incised valley, the formation of which accommodates Whittle Brook. Landform then gently rises again eastwards to Pikes Fold Golf Club and the elevated M66. Views to the site from the west are largely screened by landform, tree planting and dispersed built form. When the site does come into view, it is viewed at close range and it is the upper parts of building that are visible.
- 8.17 Overall, it is assessed that the site has a modest visual envelope with existing buildings, vegetation and landform screening many of the views towards site. This is coupled with the localised undulations in landform which also help to screen and filter close and mid range views.
- 8.18 Further afield the combination of existing development, topography, and woodland creates overlapping layers of screening which prevent significant viewing opportunities from the surrounding more sensitive residential receptors. When views are afforded to the site from these locations (see viewpoint 8), they are within the context of urban and commercial development, of which the business park forms a distant and small part of the view.

SECTION C - 9: Baseline Studies: Views and Visual Amenity

VISUAL VALUE

- 9.1 Judgments regarding the value attached to views consider whether or not views are unique, available from or to areas designated for their beauty or historic interest, and / or have a cultural association (where they are referenced in guidebooks or tourist information, include particular landmarks such as a church steeple or geological formation, etc.).
- 9.2 Selected viewpoints are illustrated in Figure 13.

Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)

- 9.3 The Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) (Figure 12), is an indicative guide based on Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 Dataset and 5m grid intervals. The ZTV demonstrates the potential worst case 'bare earth' visibility of the proposed scheme. The bare earth ZTV was produced to portray a very worst-case scenario that does not account for buildings and vegetation. This information was then used to select key viewpoints which were verified on site by the project landscape architect who was conducting the site visit. Viewpoints were then included and assessed within this report, or scoped out of the assessment due to a lack of intervisibility.
- 9.4 Whilst the ZTV illustrates large areas of visibility, site investigations found the site to be extensively screened from view by intervening local undulations in landform, existing buildings and vegetation. Therefore, Figure 12 is indicative to inform a site visit and Figure 13 provides a more accurate reflection of visibility within the wider landscape.

Legend

-  Proposed building footprint
-  Study area (3km offset from site boundary)
-  Proposed development theoretically visible (62.69% of 3km study area)

Notes

1. Predicted visibility is defined from an observer eye level of 2m above ground.
2. Created using Ordnance Survey Terrain 5 dataset at 5m grid intervals.
3. The analysis does not take into account intervening screening by vegetation or buildings.
4. Reproduced from 1:25,000 scale mapping by permission of Ordnance Survey.
5. Earth's curvature and light refraction has been included in the calculation.
6. The software used to create this ZTV does not use mathematically approximate methods.

ZTV Run Data

Site centre: 384084, 408186
 Resolution: 5m
 Calculation: Single development
 Counting method: 1 for each point visible
 Visible points: Ridgeline height (15.16m)
 % of 3km study area with theoretical visibility: 62.69%

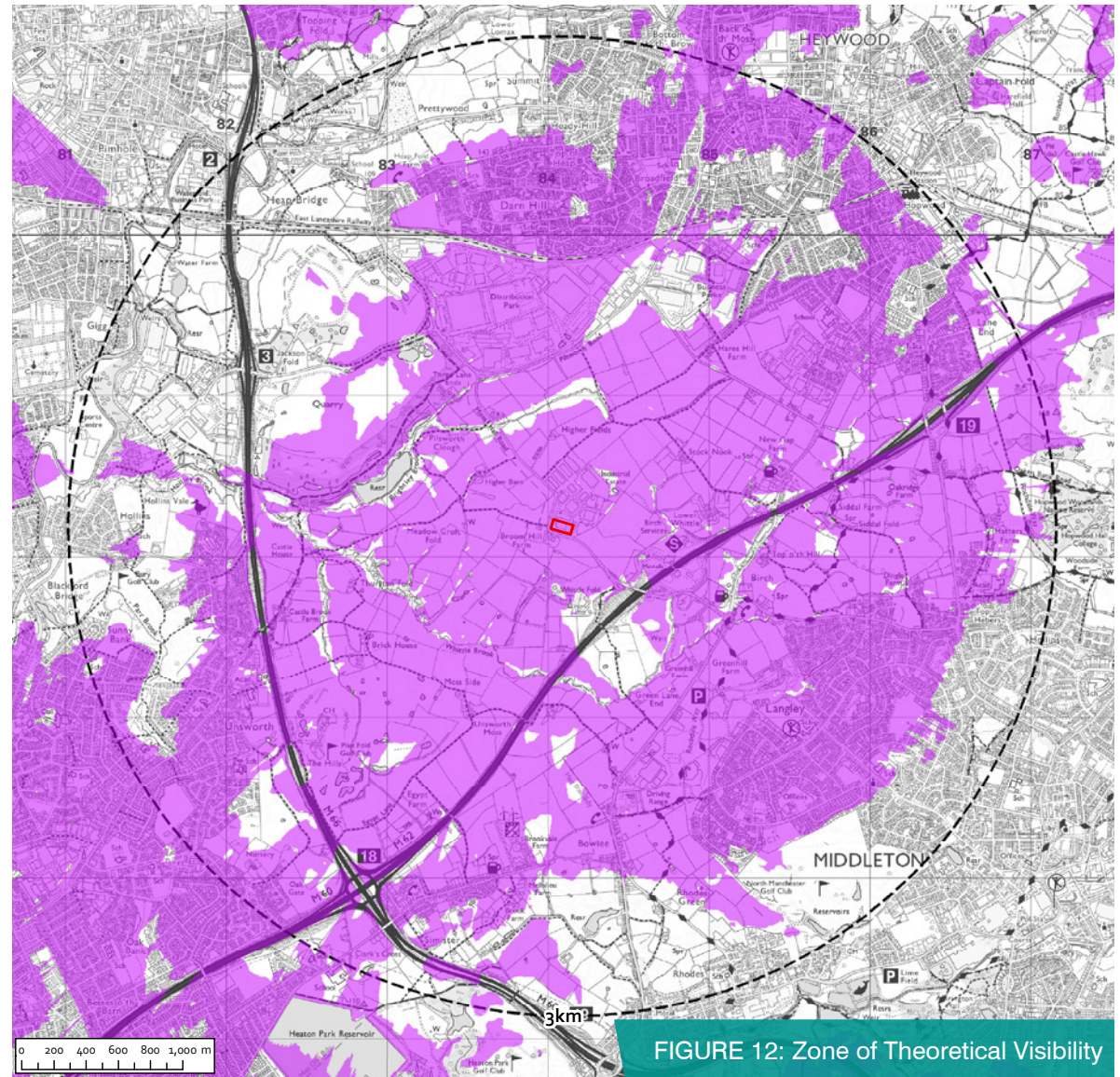


FIGURE 12: Zone of Theoretical Visibility

SECTION C - 10: Assessments: Visual Effects

INTRODUCTION

- 10.1 This section considers the amenity of potential visual receptors, i.e. people with a view over or towards the site. Table 8, along with the Visual Assessment Summary provides a tabulated assessment of the visual effects that would likely result from the emerging development proposals.
- 10.2 The assessment identifies a representative sample of receptors in order to evaluate the potential effects of development across the area. The assessment goes on to determine the sensitivity of each receptor, the nature of their views, and the magnitude of change predicted within their view by using selected representative viewpoints for each receptor.
- 10.3 The viewpoints shown on Figure 13 are selected to give a representation of the area's overall visual resource. While not exhaustive, they clearly illustrate the extent of visibility that the site is afforded to the associated receptors.
- 10.4 As noted all views were taken from the ground, during clear conditions on 13th August 2021. Vegetation was in leaf representing the best-case screening effects (although the project landscape architect has undertaken winter comparisons by using those viewpoints assessed within the LVIA produced for Unit D, and has made comments to winter views within the viewpoint descriptions).
- 10.5 The Methodology at Section A2 considers impacts of moderate or higher significance to be material in the decision-making process. As such, impacts of moderate adverse or higher significance are to be mitigated where practicable to reduce impacts to an acceptable level.
- 10.6 Full views state that the whole development is visible from the location, while partial views state when only sections of the proposed development are screened by intervening landform, vegetation or built development.

- 10.7 Selected viewpoint locations have been determined through an initial dialogue with the Council (as part of an original assessment which was subsequently reduced to only include Unit D). A bare earth ZTV was also produced which was checked, verified and a number of viewpoints scoped out following a site walkover and using professional judgment on site.

- 10.8 Selected Viewpoints are identified in Figure 13.

PHOTOMONTAGE METHODOLOGY

- 10.9 Fletcher Rae Architects was commissioned by Yeargate Ltd to undertake Illustrative Landscape Photomontages for the proposed Unit B industrial development at Birch Business Park.
- 10.10 The photography within this report was taken during a site visit on 13th August 2021 in clear weather conditions and good visibility. All UW photographs were taken with a Nikon D7200 DSLR using a 35mm focal length. All photographs have been prepared in accordance with the Landscape Institute's TGN 06/19 Visual Representation of Development Proposals (September 2019).
- 10.11 The photomontages shown in this document are scaled and measured using a 3D Model and proposed topographical information provided by Powers and Tiltman Ltd. These photomontages are illustrative and the purpose is to give an accurate representation of the scale and massing of the proposed development. It should be clearly noted that these photomontages are non-verifiable.
- 10.12 The model used to as part of the photomontage production process incorporates the proposed building heights, ground levels and the landform within the Red Line Boundary. The agreed viewpoints have then been located and matched with the same aspect as the Viewpoint Photography. A raster image has then been exported and this image has been overlaid with the Viewpoints Photography. Finally the photography has been altered in Adobe Photoshop to both remove any vegetation associated with the construction of the proposed development and render building facades.