

## 6.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

### Introduction

- 6.1 This chapter of the ES assesses the likely significant effects of the Development on the environment in respect of landscape and visual effects.
- 6.2 The objectives of this chapter are to:
- Assess the landscape characteristics and quality of the Site and its surrounding landscape and townscape context;
  - Assess the visibility of the Site and the nature and quality of the existing views from the surrounding area, including residential properties and places of work (fixed receptors) and from Public Rights of Way (PRoW), roads and public open space (transient receptors);
  - Identify opportunities and constraints to development on the Site, and inform the design of the Development with a view to avoiding or reducing adverse landscape and visual effects; and
  - Assess the likely landscape and visual effects resulting from the Development during construction and operation.
- 6.3 This chapter is supported by the following illustrative material and appendices:
- Figure 6.1 – Site Context Plan;
  - Figure 6.2 – Topographical Features Plan;
  - Figure 6.3 – Landscape Character Plan;
  - Figure 6.4 – Site Appraisal Plan; and
  - Figure 6.5 –Visual Appraisal Plan with Zone of Theoretical Visibility.
- Appendix 6.1: LVIA Methodology;
  - Appendix 6.2: Site Appraisal Photographs A-H;
  - Appendix 6.3: Site Context Photographs 1-20;
  - Appendix 6.4: Landscape Effects Table;
  - Appendix 6.5: Visual Effects Table;
  - Appendix 6.6 Illustrative Landscape Masterplan; and
  - Appendix 6.7 Extract from Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study Review.
- 6.4 The chapter has been prepared by Barton Willmore, now Stantec (refer to Appendix 1.2: Statement of Expertise).

## Policy Context

### National Planning Policy Framework<sup>i</sup>

- 6.5 The NPPF provides one concise document that sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides a planning framework within which the local community and local authorities can produce distinctive local plans that respond to local needs and priorities.
- 6.6 The NPPF promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, defined as *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"*, providing it is in accordance with the relevant up-to-date Local Plan, and policies set out in the NPPF including those identifying restrictions with regard to designated areas, such as National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and Green Belt.
- 6.7 The NPPF states that *"the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development"*, with Paragraph 8 going on to state that to achieve this the planning system has three overarching objectives: economic, social and environmental. The environmental objective is described as:

*"to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy".*

- 6.8 Paragraph 120 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should:

*"encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land, including through mixed use schemes and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains – such as developments that would enable new habitat creation or improve public access to the countryside; and recognise that some undeveloped land can perform many functions, such as for wildlife, recreation, flood risk mitigation, cooling/shading, carbon storage or food production..."*

- 6.9 Paragraphs 126-136 focus on achieving well-designed places and promote good design of the built environment. This approach is enshrined in Paragraph 130, which states:

- a) *"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*
- b) *Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*

- c) *Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- d) *Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- e) *Establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- f) *Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- g) *Create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience”.*

6.10 Section 13 is dedicated to issues of protecting the Green Belt. Paragraph 137 states “...*the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open...*” and that “...*the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.*”

6.11 Paragraph 138 subsequently sets out the following five purposes of the Green Belt:

“...

- 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.”*

6.12 In respect to altering Green Belt boundaries Paragraph 140 states that:

*“Once established, Green Belt boundaries should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans. Strategic policies should establish the need for any changes to Green Belt boundaries, having regard to their intended permanence in the long term, so they can endure beyond the plan period. Where a need for changes to Green Belt boundaries has been established through strategic policies, detailed amendments to those boundaries may be made through non-strategic policies, including neighbourhood plans.”*

6.13 Paragraph 142 notes in respect of the review of Green Belt boundaries, through the process of strategic policy review that:

*"When drawing up or reviewing Green Belt boundaries, the need to promote sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account. Strategic policy-making authorities should consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary. Where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport. They should also set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land."*

6.14 In respect of Green Belt Boundaries, Paragraph 143 states that:

*"When defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should:*

*...*

*b) not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;*

*....*

*e) be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period; and*

*f) define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent."*

6.15 Paragraph 145 states that:

*"...local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land."*

6.16 Section 15 relates to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, with Paragraph 174 setting out that planning policies and decisions should look to achieve the above by *"protecting and enhancing valued landscapes"* and *"recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services"*.

Planning Practice Guidance<sup>ii</sup>

6.17 To support the policies of the NPPF, the Government has produced Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) covering a number of topics.

6.18 Under the topic of Design: process and tools and sub-heading of Planning for well-designed places (Paragraph: 001) the PPG states that *"development that is not well designed should*

*be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes".* Conversely, it states that significant weight should be given to:

- a) *"development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b) *outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings".*

6.19 This section of the PPG also introduces the National Design Guide<sup>iii</sup> that sets out the 10 characteristics of good design, including:

- *"Context (enhances the surroundings);*
- *Identity (attractive and distinctive);*
- *Built form (a coherent pattern of development);*
- *Movement (accessible and easy to move around);*
- *Nature (enhanced and optimised);*
- *Public Spaces (safe, social and inclusive);*
- *Uses (mixed and integrated);*
- *Homes and Buildings (functional, healthy and sustainable);*
- *Resources (efficient and resilient); and*
- *Lifespan (made to last)".*

6.20 Under the topic of Natural Environment, the sub-heading of Green Infrastructure, Paragraph 5 focuses on the natural capital that green infrastructure can add to communities including *"...enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes..."*. This approach to achieving biodiverse communities is enshrined in Paragraph 6, which states:

- "Green infrastructure can help in:*
- *Building a strong, competitive economy;*
  - *Achieving well-designed places;*
  - *Promoting healthy and safe communities;*
  - *Mitigating climate change, flooding and coastal change; and*
  - *Conserving and enhancing the natural environment".*

6.21 Under the sub-heading of Landscape, Paragraph 37 supports the use of LVIA to *"demonstrate the likely effects of a proposed development on the landscape"*. The PPG also makes reference to Natural England's guidance<sup>iv</sup> on undertaking landscape character assessment *"to complement Natural England's National Character Area Profiles"*.

*Local Planning Policy*

- 6.22 The Site lies within the administrative boundary of Rochdale Borough Council (RBC). The Local Plan comprises several documents including the Core Strategy (2016) and the Unitary Development Plan (2006), which is still in place until the Allocations Development Plan draft has been adopted. Therefore, current local policy comprises policies from both the Core Strategy document, as well as the Unitary Development Plan document.

*Rochdale Borough Core Strategy for the Local Plan, adopted 2016<sup>v</sup>*

- 6.23 The policies within the Core Strategy of relevance to the immediate context of the Site and landscape and visual matters are set out below.
- 6.24 Policy G1 - Tackling and adapting to climate change states:

*"We will address climate change and ensure growth does not increase CO2 emissions by:*

- *Locating growth in areas which are likely to minimise the need for travel and which are well served by public transport, services and infrastructure;*
- *Expecting all development and regeneration schemes to be well connected to surrounding areas and facilities by sustainable means of transport (Policy T2);*
- *...*
- *Ensuring that development does not cause unacceptable harm to the borough's peatlands and woodlands, and encouraging their restoration and responsible management;*
- *Promoting sustainable waste management through the operation of policies in the Core Strategy and Greater Manchester Joint Waste Plan;*
- *Making the best use of open space to contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation; and*
- *Securing planning obligations for energy infrastructure and climate change adaptation measures.*
- *New developments will be expected to:*
  - a) Be zero carbon in line with national targets and definitions;*
  - b) Adhere to the 'energy hierarchy' as outlined in policy G2, being designed in such a way that ensures that buildings require the minimum amount of energy to function over their lifetime;*
  - c) Reduce CO2 emissions through the use of renewable and low carbon decentralised energy technologies and networks. This will be through both on-site provision in new developments and through connection to local networks;*
  - d) Address the impacts of climate change by incorporating comprehensive adaptation measures, including:*
    - i) suitable measures, such as urban greening, for tackling the 'urban heat island' effect;*

- ii) *where possible, the opening up of covered and culverted sections of waterways and provision of new water features, to help cooling and provide biodiversity, landscape and flood prevention benefits;*
- iii) *the incorporation of appropriate water conservation and management measures, such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), including ensuring that the rate of run-off on 'greenfield' sites is not increased and on 'brownfield' sites is significantly reduced, and avoiding the use of impermeable surfaces;*
- iv) *the retention of existing trees wherever possible and the taking of all appropriate opportunities to plant trees and other suitable vegetation on site; and*
- v) *the incorporation of 'green roofs' wherever possible, such as with flat roofs."*

#### 6.25 Policy G4 - Protecting Green Belt land states:

*"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."*

#### 6.26 Policy G5 - Managing protected open land states:

*"...*

*3. Release of Protected Open Land Protected Open Land will not be released for development unless all the following apply:*

- a) *there is evidence that the development is needed and that 'urban' brownfield and greenfield sites are not available to meet those needs;*
- b) *the location of the site is sustainable and is in accordance with the overall Spatial Strategy;*
- c) *the development does not undermine the delivery of other currently allocated sites or key regeneration priorities and can help to deliver wider regeneration;*
- d) *development could be accommodated without an unacceptable impact on the area's landscape, biodiversity or wider green infrastructure value;*
- e) *there is evidence that the land is physically suitable for the scale and type of development proposed; and*
- f) *the development and supporting infrastructure is capable of being delivered. Where the release of protected open land can be justified, the Council will seek to identify it as an allocation*

*in a future DPD. Any proposals that come forward would need to:*

- g) involve a comprehensive scheme for the delivery of the development, transport and other necessary infrastructure to serve the development; and*
- h) identify measures to address environmental impacts and where possible provide local benefits."*

#### 6.27 Policy G6 - Enhancing green infrastructure states:

*"...*

*A Green Infrastructure Strategy for the borough and Green Infrastructure Action Plans for each Township will inform and support area based masterplans and initiatives, development proposals and associated developer contributions, regeneration programmes and environmental management schemes.*

*We will expect development proposals and other proposals affecting green infrastructure to:*

- a) be consistent with the above focus for green infrastructure and the wider than local value that green infrastructure can have;*
- b) have regard to local landscape character and contribute to its conservation or enhancement;*
- c) avoid the loss of existing urban greenspace or features e.g. trees unless suitable alternative provision is made, it has limited value, and its development or change of use will help to meet other sustainability or local regeneration objectives;*
- d) in the case of residential development, provide or contribute financially towards recreational open space, including maintenance, in accordance with the standards set out in the Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);*
- e) take opportunities to improve access to, and the provision of, natural greenspace in accordance with local strategies and standards*
- f) take opportunities to secure innovative solutions to the design of urban open space to widen its potential functions e.g. flood risk management, promoting urban wildlife or climate change adaptation;*
- g) not sever, or impede the key functions of designated greenspace corridors or river valleys, or detract from their natural, visual or recreational quality, but enhance their value and accessibility;*
- h) 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; and*
- i) take opportunities, where feasible, to improve the water quality and biodiversity of water bodies and their environs in compliance with the Water Framework Directive or equivalent."*

*Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (Adopted 2006)<sup>vi</sup>*

#### 6.28 The policies within the Unitary Development Plan that are of relevance to the immediate context of the Site and landscape and visual matters are set out below.

## 6.29 Policy D/10 Protected Open Land states:

*"Within the areas of Protected Open Land defined on the Proposals Map, development proposals will be permitted that fall within one or more of the following categories*

- a) development which would be acceptable were it in the Green Belt; or*
- b) limited infilling within an established pocket of housing or industry where this is in scale with the area and will not adversely affect its character or surroundings; or*

*...  
Where new buildings are permitted, they should be sited to form a group with existing buildings. Where this is not possible, buildings, car parking areas and other new structures, should be sited where they will be well screened and unobtrusive in the landscape. All buildings and extensions should be of a high standard of design, using materials that are compatible with the landscape, and should not detract from the visual amenity and environment of adjacent Green Belt."*

## 6.30 Policy NE/6 Landscape Protection and Enhancement states:

*"Development will be permitted where it conserves the physical and cultural attributes of the landscape and contributes, as appropriate, to the regeneration, restoration, enhancement or maintenance of the landscape likely to be affected.*

*Proposals with potential landscape and visual implications will be assessed having regard to the extent to which they would:*

- a) Make a positive contribution to the visual amenity of the area (including views into and from the site and surrounding area);*
- b) Remove incongruous landscape features;*
- c) Assist the conservation of:*
  - i) Landscape elements that contribute to local distinctiveness;*
  - ii) Historic elements which make a significant contribution (individually or cumulatively) to landscape character and quality (e.g., field, settlement or road patterns, existing buildings, sites and features of archaeological interest); i*
  - iii) Semi-natural vegetation which is characteristic to the landscape type;*
  - iv) The visual condition of landscape elements; and*
  - v) Tranquillity and the amenity and informal recreation value of the landscape.*

*Development which adversely affects the character or physical structure of the landscape or which would detract from the physical record of the historic and cultural evolution of an area will not be permitted."*

*Greater Manchester Places for Everyone<sup>vii</sup>*

- 6.31 Nine councils in Greater Manchester submitted the Places for Everyone (PfE) plan to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities along with a series of supporting documents, background evidence, and representations received during the final stage of public consultation in mid to late 2021.
- 6.32 The Site and an area of land south of the A627 (M) which wraps around Stakehill Industrial Estate is draft allocated within the PfE under Policy JP Allocation 2: Stakehill.

*"Policy JP Allocation 2: Stakehill**Development at this site will be required to:*

- 1. Deliver around 150,000 sqm of high quality, adaptable, employment floorspace within a 'green' employment park setting, with a focus on suitable provision for advanced manufacturing and other key growth sectors, taking advantage of its accessible location and proximity to Junction 20 of the M62, and complementing the other opportunities within the North-East Growth Corridor;*
- 2. Provide around 1,680 high quality homes, including larger, higher value properties, to support the new jobs created within the North-East Growth Corridor and create a sustainable and high quality extension to the urban area;*
- 3. Achieve excellent design and sustainability through masterplanning and the use of design codes for the whole site to ensure comprehensive development. The scale of the residential development on the northern part of the allocation provides an opportunity to adopt a 'garden village' approach to create a locally distinctive residential offer;*
- 4. Ensure that the design of the scheme preserves or enhances the setting of the listed St John's Church and war memorial in line with the findings and recommendations of the Historic Environment Assessment (2020) in the Plan's evidence base and any updated assessment submitted as part of the planning application process;*
- 5. Protect and enhance archaeological features and where appropriate carry out archaeological evaluation in the form of geophysics, field walking and trial trenching for areas specified in the Stakehill Historic Environment Assessment 2020 to understand where especially significant archaeology must be preserved in situ;*
- 6. Have regard to views from Tandle Hill Country Park in terms of the design, landscaping and boundary treatment in order to minimise the visual impact as much as possible;*
- 7. Retain a strategic area of Green Belt between the A627(M) spur and Thornham Lane to maintain separation between the urban areas of Rochdale and Middleton;*
- 8. Support the delivery of improved public transport to and within the area to promote more sustainable travel and improve linkages to the employment opportunities from surrounding residential areas;*
- 9. Contribute to the proposed new railway station at Slattocks which is currently being investigated by TfGM and ensure that new development is designed in a way to maximise the benefits of the new*

*rail station through the creation of high quality walking and cycling routes;*

*10. Provide good quality walking and cycling routes to connect to new and existing residential areas and local transport hubs in order to encourage sustainable short journeys to work and promote healthier lifestyles;*

*11. Provide appropriate access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure and cycle storage;*

*12. Provide financial contributions to mitigate impacts on the highway network identified through a transport assessment;*

*13. Improve access arrangements in and around Stakehill Industrial Estate to assist in the separation of residential and employment traffic as much as possible and to make appropriate provision for lorry parking;*

*14. Ensure that the existing settlements and pockets of housing are taken fully into account through the masterplanning of the area;*

*15. Deliver high quality landscaping and green and blue infrastructure within the site both to enhance the attractiveness of the scheme and provide opportunities for recreation to both residents and people working in the area. This should include good quality boundary treatment, particularly on the boundary separating the development area and land to be retained as Green Belt to the south to provide an attractive defensible Green Belt boundary;*

*16. Retain and where possible enhance areas of biodiversity within the area, notably the Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest, along with the existing brooks and ponds within the site;*

*17. Carry out a project specific Habitats Regulation Assessment for planning applications of 1,000 sqm / 50 dwellings or more;*

*18. Contribute and make provision for additional primary and secondary school places to serve the development. This will include provision of land and financial contributions to deliver the expansion of Thornham St John's Primary School located within the allocation;"*

6.33 A comprehensive evidence base was assembled to support the policies and proposals in the GMSF 2020. This evidence base remains the fundamental basis for the PfE 2021. The following evidence documents are of relevance to this Chapter:

- Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment;
- Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study Addendum: Assessment of Proposed 2021 PfE Plan Allocations; and
- Green Belt Topic Paper and Case for Exceptional Circumstances to amend the Green Belt Boundary – July 2021.

6.34 The above documents are considered further within the report below.

#### Rochdale Township Green Infrastructure Action Plan (2013)

6.35 A Green Infrastructure Action Plan has been developed for Rochdale. This ensures green infrastructure is protected, managed, and enhanced with new areas created where deemed

suitable. The document identifies 16 character areas within the Rochdale Township, with the Site located within Character Area 15: South Rochdale Green Fringe, which is described as follows:

*"The largely agricultural landscape of dairy farms is dominated by the M62 and A627(M) motorways. The area includes the distinct urban area of Buersil along Oldham Road with large houses and mature gardens. There are three SBIs, one along the A627(M) which is split into two separate areas, Gerrard Wood SBI adjacent to Tandle Hill and Stanney Brook SBI, which is an important biodiversity link to the Crompton area in the south. The woods and lodges around Trows Lane are also important for biodiversity. There is a good network of access routes including the South Rochdale Forest Trail (SRFT) to Tandle Hill, although the motorways are a significant barrier to movement and signage is inconsistent".*

6.36 The document identifies three Main Issues and Opportunities for the character area:

- *"Explore opportunities to work in partnership with farmers and land managers to increase biodiversity, such as surrounding Gerrard Wood and create access improvements, particularly to the north of the area, around Buersil Head;*
- *Working with the Highways Agency to explore opportunities for biodiversity improvements to the motorway verges and improvements to the gateway to Rochdale; [and]*
- *Improve signposting of routes from urban areas particularly out to Hopwood Woods, Tandle Hill and Crompton Moor, to help mitigate the barrier to movement of the motorways".*

### **Assessment Methodology**

6.37 A summary of the assessment methodology is outlined below with the full methodology provided in Appendix 6.1: LVIA Methodology.

#### **Study Area**

6.38 The study area for this assessment broadly equates to the extents shown in Figure 6.1: Site Context Plan.

6.39 To determine the extent of visual influence, a visual appraisal was undertaken of the Site to consider the nature of existing views from publicly accessible viewpoints including roads, PRow and public open space. Consideration was given to private views, however access to private properties was not obtained. A series of representative views were subsequently selected to demonstrate the character of the Site and the study area and to represent the

visual experience of visual receptors in the study area. Views were considered from all directions and from a range of distances.

- 6.40 The viewpoints chosen have been field verified and are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to represent the potential views obtained towards the Site in order to identify areas of higher visual sensitivity that may not be best suited for development. The viewpoints represent visual receptors likely to experience visual effects as a result of the Development, and were chosen to cover a range of views.

#### Baseline Data Collection

- 6.41 A desktop review of the study area was undertaken, including a review of published landscape character information and relevant landscape and visual policy, and analysis of landscape context, landform, landscape features and landscape designations. This information was used as the initial basis against which to appraise the Site. A visit to the Site and surroundings was subsequently undertaken in August 2022 to verify the desk-based review findings and underpin a robust understanding of the landscape and visual context of the Site.
- 6.42 A description of the existing land use of the study area is provided and includes reference to existing areas of settlement, transport routes and vegetation cover, as well as national and local landscape designations and elements of cultural and heritage value. These factors combine to underpin an understanding of landscape value and provide an indication of particular key views and viewpoints that are available to visual receptors.

#### Assessment

- 6.43 The methodology used for the LVIA is drawn from principles of good practice in Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition<sup>viii</sup> (GLVIA3) and is set out in full in Appendix 6.1: LVIA Methodology, which also includes full definitions for the relevant terminology used below.
- 6.44 The purpose of LVIA is to identify the potential for and assess the likely effects of change resulting from development. Landscape and visual assessments are separate, although linked processes. A distinction is made between:
- landscape - landscape character and the elements and features that contribute to it (landscape receptors); and

- visual - people who experience views within the landscape (visual receptors). This can be fixed receptors (residents and workers) or transient receptors (PRoW, roads and public open space).

6.45 Landscape encompasses the whole of the external environment, whether within towns, villages or countryside. It is not only the visual perception of a combination of landform, vegetation cover and buildings, but also embodies the history, land use, human culture, wildlife and seasonal changes of an area. The landscape can be considered as a resource in its own right (providing food, cultural heritage, clean air etc.) and as a visual amenity (views, walks or recreational pursuits). As a result, landscape and visual impacts are assessed separately.

#### Landscape Assessment

- 6.46 The capacity (or susceptibility) of a landscape relates to the ability to accept change of the type and scale proposed and will be influenced by the likely ability of the landscape to accommodate the introduction of new features while retaining the essential characteristics that define it.
- 6.47 The sensitivity of a landscape receptor is a combination of the value of the landscape resource and the susceptibility of the landscape receptor to the type of change proposed; that is the capacity for the landscape receptor to accommodate the Development.
- 6.48 The assessment of value is based on a combination of the importance of landscape-related planning designations and, as appropriate, such attributes as scenic quality, perceptual aspects, rarity, representativeness, recreation and association. The overall value for each landscape receptor is categorised as High, Medium or Low – see Appendix 6.1: Table 1.1.
- 6.49 Landscape susceptibility is categorised as High, Medium, Low – see Appendix 6.1: Table 1.2. The following criteria are taken into consideration in the assessment of landscape susceptibility: landform, pattern/complexity, composition, land-cover and relationship to existing settlements or developments. However, not all criteria are equally applicable or important within a given landscape / type of development proposed.
- 6.50 Based on the combination of value and susceptibility, an assessment of landscape sensitivity with regards to accommodating the type of development proposed is reached, and categorised as High, Medium or Low.

- 6.51 The magnitude of effect (change) affecting landscape receptors depends upon the nature, scale, extent and duration of the particular change within the landscape and any loss of, or change to, important features or characteristics. The magnitude of change for each landscape receptor is categorised as Large, Medium, Small, Very Small and None – see Appendix 6.1: Table 1.3.

#### Visual Assessment

- 6.52 The sensitivity of a visual receptor is a consideration of the value of the view and the susceptibility of the visual receptor to the type of change proposed.
- 6.53 The assessment of value is based upon the importance of the location of the view, its designations, cultural associations and the amount to which the view forms part of the experience in the location. The overall value for each visual receptor is categorised as High, Medium or Low – see Appendix 6.1: Table 1.4.
- 6.54 Visual susceptibility to the type of change proposed is based upon the activity or expectation of the viewer. It is categorised as High, Medium, Low – see Appendix 6.1: Table 1.5. Where people are in their homes or engaged in outdoor recreation focussed on the landscape, visual receptors may have a high susceptibility, whilst it may be low for those engaged in work or travelling on major roads.
- 6.55 Based on the combination of value and susceptibility, an assessment of visual sensitivity with regards to accommodating development is reached, and categorised as High, Medium or Low.
- 6.56 The magnitude of effect (change) affecting visual receptors depends on the location of the view and the overall effect on a particular view. The angle of the view, duration of view, distance from the Development and character of the existing view all influence the magnitude of change. The magnitude of change for visual receptors is categorised as Large, Medium, Small, Very Small and None – see Appendix 6.1: Table 1.6.

#### Significance of Effect

- 6.57 In order to arrive at a measure of the significance of the overall effect, the sensitivity is combined with the magnitude of change for each landscape or visual receptor and are rated on a scale of Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible or None, with Moderate or Major effects deemed 'significant' – see Appendix 6.1: Figure 1.1 and Table 1.7.

- 6.58 Effects are defined as beneficial, adverse, or neutral. This consideration is termed the 'balance of effects', factoring in both the potentially beneficial and adverse aspects associated with a given change and its resultant effect.

### **Cumulative Assessment**

- 6.59 The assessment of likely significant cumulative effects considers the landscape and visual effects that will arise as a result of additional changes to the landscape resource or visual amenity caused by the Development in combination with other consented schemes.

- 6.60 The cumulative assessment takes into consideration:

- The extent to which the emerging schemes and the Development extend or intensify the landscape and/or visual effects of each scheme;
- The extent to which the landscape resource is altered due to the modifications in land use and pattern;
- The interrelations between the different types of built forms;
- The incremental changes as a result of successive built forms being introduced;
- The temporal effects arising due to simultaneous or successive construction activities over an extended period of time; and
- The indirect effects arising from the enabling works of each consented scheme and/or the consequences of the removal of elements of the landscape.

- 6.61 Cumulative landscape effects relate to the loss and/or addition of features as a result of the Development and other emerging schemes that alter the physical fabric and character of a landscape.

- 6.62 Cumulative visual effects may arise as a result of combined visibility and/or sequential effects and are principally concerned with the change in the composition of available views and the visual amenity experience.

### **Green Belt Review**

#### *Assessment against the purposes of the Green Belt*

- 6.63 The Site is assessed against the first four purposes of the Green Belt as set out in Paragraph 138 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which are:

- "to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; and
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns..."

- 6.64 With respect to the fifth purpose of the Green Belt *"to assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land"*, should the Site be brought forward for development it would not prejudice derelict or other urban land being brought forward for urban regeneration. Accordingly, no additional specific assessment is undertaken.
- 6.65 The NPPF seeks to align Green Belt boundary reviews with sustainable patterns of development, as set out in paragraph 142, with Local Planning Authorities encouraged to *"consider the consequences for sustainable development of channelling development towards urban areas inside the Green Belt boundary, towards towns and villages inset within the Green Belt or towards locations beyond the outer Green Belt boundary"*.
- 6.66 In this regard, where a given area of land contributes poorly towards meeting the purposes of the Green Belt and its release would contribute positively to promoting a sustainable development pattern, this may be considered to impart 'exceptional circumstances' and the Green Belt boundary should be reviewed accordingly.

*Assessment against the characteristics of the Green Belt*

- 6.67 The NPPF states that the key characteristics of the Green Belt are *"their openness and their permanence"*. In defining new boundaries to the Green Belt, it must be ensured that these characteristics are not diminished for the areas remaining within the Green Belt designation as a direct result of development. An assessment is made of the openness of the Green Belt in the vicinity of the Site and to what extent the Site's removal could have on the perception of openness in the remaining designated area.
- 6.68 In addition, the relationship of the Site to existing elements and visual barriers, such as ridgelines, roads and areas of notable vegetation is demonstrated. This assists in the assessment of impact of potential development upon the openness of the remaining designated area and assists in the identification of boundaries that may be considered to be 'permanent'.
- 6.69 Table 6.1 below provides a glossary of the terms used in relation to the Green Belt assessment.

**Table 6.1: Definitions**

| <b>Term</b>               | <b>Definition</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brownfield                | (see <i>Previously Developed Land</i> )                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Character                 | A distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that differentiates one area from another.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Coalescence               | The physical or visual linkage of large built-up areas.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Countryside               | In planning terms: land outwith the settlement boundary; and/or, in broader terms: the landscape of a rural area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Defensible Boundary       | A physical feature that is readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Encroachment              | Advancement of a large built-up area beyond the limits of the existing built-up area into an area perceived as countryside.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Green Infrastructure      | A network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Greenfield                | Land (or a defined site) usually farmland, that has not previously been developed.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Large Built-up Area       | An area that corresponds to the settlements identified in the relevant Local Plan, including those inset from the Green Belt.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Merging                   | (see <i>Coalescence</i> )                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Neighbouring Town         | Refers to settlements identified within the relevant Local Plan and those within the neighbouring authorities' administrative boundary that abut the Green Belt.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Open space                | All open space of public value, including not just land, but also areas of water (such as rivers, canals, lakes and reservoirs) which offer important opportunities for sport and recreation and can act as a visual amenity.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Openness                  | Openness is taken to be the degree to which an area is primarily unaffected by built features, in combination with the consideration of the visual perception of built features. In order to be a robust assessment, this should be considered from first principles, i.e. acknowledging existing structures that occur physically and visually within the area, rather than seeing them as being 'washed over' by the existing Green Belt designation.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Previously Developed Land | Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built -up areas such as private gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time. |
| Sprawl                    | The outward spread of a large built-up area in an incoherent, sporadic, dispersed or irregular way.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

*Limitations and Assumptions*

6.70 In undertaking the Landscape and Visual assessment of the Site and wider surrounding area, there are a number of limitations and constraints affecting the outputs from this work. These include:

- The baseline assessment has been based on information readily available at the time of undertaking the assessment;
- During Site visits, weather conditions, the time of day and seasonal factors have influenced the visual assessment and photographic record of the Site. Every effort has been made to ensure that the photographs and their locations are 'representative' of the Site and its surroundings;
- Gaining access to assess the predicted visual effects from private individual properties outside the Site has not been obtained. As a result, the assessment of likely visual effects has been made from vantage points with representative views taken from the nearest available public viewpoint in combination with the views available from the Site itself; and
- The assessment of the Development at Year 1 (the year of completion) is based on the Parameter Plan (Figure 3.1, and Illustrative Landscape Masterplan (Appendix 6.6). The assessment of the Development at Year 15 is based on these as well as information relating to the design contained within the Design and Access Statement (submitted separately with the planning application), and the illustrative landscape masterplan (Appendix 6.6).

**Baseline Conditions**

## Site Context

*Location and Land Use*

- 6.71 As demonstrated by Figure 6.1: Site Context Plan, the Site is located between the settlements of Rochdale to the north and Middleton to the south. Other areas of settlement within the study area include Heywood, Royton, Shaw and Milnwood.
- 6.72 Existing land use varies across the study area. The Site is predominantly agricultural land enclosed by existing urban development to the west at Castleton and Slattocks on the A664. The agricultural landscape is generally highly fragmented by the dense network of large transport corridors that surround the Site. Local development and typical land uses associated with local residential areas, along with Golf clubs, including the Manchester Golf Club and the

Castle Hawk Golf Club, dominate the open land within the western half of the study area. The Stakehill Industrial Estate covers 90 hectares (ha) approximately 130m to the south of the Site beyond the A627(M) Spur.

- 6.73 The local landscape to the east is characterised by agricultural land on rising landform with scattered farmsteads. Tandle Hill Country Park is located on and around the higher ground to the east, beyond which lies a further area of residential development at Royton, focused along the A671.
- 6.74 The M62 crosses the study area immediately to the north of the Site in a north-east/south-west orientation, and the A627(M) runs north into Rochdale and south along the eastern Site boundary from the Thornham Interchange (Junction 20) immediately adjacent to the north-eastern corner of the Site.
- 6.75 Rochdale Canal and the Caldervale Railway Line runs north/south through the study area, approximately 125m and 290m to the west of the Site, respectively. Other railway lines are present within the wider study area, including the East Lancashire Railway Line and the Metrolink Railway Line.

#### *Topography and Hydrology*

- 6.76 As shown in Figure 6.2: Topographical Features Plan, the landform within the study area undulates with a series of shallow valleys associated with the River Roch in the north west and the River Irk in the south. The landform to the east of the study area becomes more elevated. Elevations within the study area range from 235m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) in the east to 125m AOD in the north west and south west.
- 6.77 The immediate topographical context of the Site reflects a pattern similar to that of the wider study area, with the landform to the east being substantially more elevated than that of the Site (reaching 222m AOD at Tandle Hill), and falling to the west toward the Rochdale Canal (135m AOD) and the Trub Brook (125m AOD) and its minor tributaries that drain the locally undulating land at the Manchester Golf Club, which varies between 123m and 158m AOD. Numerous springs, ponds, small lakes and reservoirs are present within the study area.

#### *Public Rights of Way*

- 6.78 The study area is served by a network of PRow as shown in Figure 6.1: Site Context Plan, though this network is in some places fragmented. PRow in the vicinity of the Site include the following:

- PRow RocF Fp20 which heads east from the existing settlement edge of Trub that bounds the western edge of the Site. From here it passes along the northern edge of Newhey Farm where it joins PRow Mid Fp 6 and PRow Restricted Byway Roc F Rupp33.
- PRow Restricted Byway Roc F Rupp33 runs for a short distance south from Newhey Farm, where it becomes Mid Fp7. The route heads south along a farm track to meet Thornham Lane to the south.
- PRow Restricted Byway Mid Rupp 30 runs south east from Thronham New Road, where to the south west of Thronfields Farm it becomes PRow Footpath Fp3. Here it joins to Restricted Byway Mid Rupp130 at the eastern Site boundary.
- PRow Footpath RocF 21 runs south from PRow Restricted Byway Roc F Rupp33, through the centre of the Stie, ending at Thronham Road.
- PRow Restricted Byway Mid Rupp 130, part of the long distance recreational route the Rochdale Way, crosses the southern extents of the study area and the Site itself, in a broadly north-east/south-west orientation.
- PRow Footpath Mid Fp8, which becomes PRow Restricted Byway Mid Rupp8a to the south of St John Thornham Church, passes through the south western corner of the Site.
- Tandle Hill Park Country Park lies within the local landscape, approximately 580m to the east of the Site at the closest point. The Oldham Way long distance route passes across and around this higher ground and within south-eastern extents of the study area.

6.79 The South Rochdale Forest Trail is a recreational route identified within the Rochdale Township Green Infrastructure Action Plan<sup>ix</sup> and takes a circular route (part of which runs through the Site) along a number of the PRow identified above, connecting the southern settlement edge of Rochdale with the Tandle Hill Country Park.

### *Designations*

6.80 The location and extent of relevant national and local landscape designations are identified in Figure 6.1: Site Context Plan.

6.81 The Site is not covered by any designations for landscape or scenic beauty. However, the following designations within the study area are of note:

- The Site lies wholly within the Liverpool and Manchester Green Belt, although sections of the northern and western Site boundaries follow the Green Belt boundary, which in places is drawn tightly around the settlement edge, particularly around existing built form at

Castleton, extending south from Rochdale along Rochdale Road, but washing over built form at Slattocks further south.

- The nearest Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the Rochdale Canal SSSI (also a Special Area of Conservation (SAC)), which runs along the canal bisecting the study area in a north/south orientation, and at its nearest point is 125m from the western Site boundary.
- Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are present within the study area, the nearest of which is Hopwood Woodlands LNR, which comprises four parcels, the nearest parcel being 450m to the south-west of the Site.
- Scattered areas of Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland are present within the study area, with several small blocks to the south-west of the Site, the nearest of which is approximately 450m from Site boundary.
- Tandle Hill Country Park is situated approximately 580m to the east of the Site.

6.82 No Ramsar Sites or Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are present within the study area.

6.83 Heritage assets within the study area include the following:

- There are a number of Conservation Areas present within the study area, including Castleton South (approximately 340m to the north), Heywood Station (approximately 2.2km to the west) and Royton (approximately 2.3km to the south-east).
- The south-western boundary of the Site wraps around the setting of two listed buildings (Church of St John and Thornham Parish War Memorial, both Grade II). Several other listed buildings are present in the Site's immediate context, the nearest of which is Rochdale Canal Slattocks Top Lock (Number 54) and Adjoining Bridge, also Grade II, approximately 270m to the south-west of the Site. There are many other listed buildings within the study area, though all are more than 500m from the Site boundary.
- The nearest Registered Parks and Garden is Chadderton Cemetery, Grade II, approximately 2.7km to the south-east of the Site.

#### *Vegetation and Field Pattern*

6.84 The vegetative structure of the study area is defined by a network of hedgerows of varying conditions, with occasional hedgerow trees. Agricultural land is predominantly pastoral, including a few isolated areas of fields in arable use, with a patchwork of fields creating a simple rural backdrop to the existing industrial/residential/commercial development. There are some notable trees belts / linear woodlands that form mature embankment planting

associated with the transport routes that pass in proximity to the Site and the wider study area.

- 6.85 Woodland cover within the study area is associated particularly with the Hopwood Woodlands LNR to the south west and Manchester Golf Course immediately to the west, as well as with the Tandle Hill Country Park to the east of the Site. Ancient Semi Natural Woodland constitutes a very small proportion of the tree cover within the western part of the study area.

## **Landscape Character**

### Published Landscape Character Context

- 6.86 The landscape character assessment approach is a descriptive approach that seeks to identify and define the distinct character of landscapes that make up the country. This approach recognises the intrinsic value of all landscapes, not just 'special' landscapes, as contributing factors in people's quality of life, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention. It also ensures that account is taken of the different roles and character of different areas, in accordance with the NPPF. The description of each landscape is used as a basis for evaluation, in order to make judgements to guide, for example, development or landscape management. The various landscape areas are shown on Figure 6.3: Landscape Character Plan.

### *National Landscape Character*

- 6.87 As part of Natural England's responsibilities in delivering the Natural Environment White Paper, Biodiversity 2020 and the European Landscape Convention, Natural England has developed a series of National Character Area (NCA) profiles. These NCA profiles include an outline of the key characteristics that define broad landscape character areas.

### NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe<sup>x</sup>

- 6.88 The Site is located within NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe, which sets out four Statements of Environmental Opportunity (SEO) as well as identifying the key characteristics of the area. SEO 1 aims to manage the network of green infrastructure within urban areas, to increase biodiversity and strengthen access and use; SEO 2 aims to manage and enhance distinctive features of the Pennine fringe landscape, to strengthen landscape character and improve the connectivity and condition of habitat; SEO 3 aims to manage and enhance characteristic watercourses in the area and conserve and extend the associated habitats through managed flood risk, improving water quality and opportunities for recreation; and SEO 4 aims to manage existing woodlands and forests, extending woodland appropriately to aid in tackling

climate change, improving biodiversity, reducing the impact of new development and providing green links within urban areas.

6.89 The profile describes the key characteristics of the NCA, including the following:

- *"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".*

#### *District Landscape Character*

#### Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Study (2018)<sup>xi</sup>

6.90 The Landscape Character and Sensitivity Study of Greater Manchester was undertaken by Landscape Use Consultants (LUC). It describes ten Landscape Character Types (LCTs), of which LCT Urban Fringe Farmland is relevant to the Site. LCT Urban Fringe Farmland is divided into 14 sub-areas, some of which are duplicated in other LCTs. The Site is located within LCA 27 *Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green* (refer to Figure 6.3 – Landscape Character Plan).

6.91 The key characteristics of LCA 27 *Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green* include:

*"Topography, geology and drainage*

- *Rolling landscape with elevation ranging between 30 and 250m AOD...;*
- *Elevated farmland to the north...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...;*
- *Glacial till and fluvial deposits overlay the bedrock, creating the rolling landform;*
- *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.*
- *Flatter, more fertile floodplain areas give rise to a mix of pasture and arable cultivation. Fields tend to be larger with subtle boundary features, with occasional small pasture fields to the east of Altrincham;*
- *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; [and]*
- *The open farmland contrasts strongly with adjoining residential and industrial urban areas, often forming a rural buffer to the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills.*

*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 (e.g. Oaken Bank Wood and Glade Wood within Hopwood Woodlands Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Rochdale) provide important habitats and wildlife corridors; [and]*
- *Established clumps of hawthorn and dog rose line some of the field boundaries and highways, with some incorporating mature broadleaved trees...*

*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 and the Peak District National Park;*

- *Long views towards the coastal plain to the west stretch as far as Fiddler's Ferry Power Station near Widnes;*
- *Historic mills with tall chimneys and warehouses also form landmarks on the skyline; [and]*
- *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".*

6.92 The study concludes that the overall assessment of landscape sensitivity of LCA 27 for two to three storey residential housing developments is '**moderate**'.

*Published Landscape Character Guidance*

6.93 The SEO set out for the NCA 54 that relate to the Site are:

- *"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.*
- *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.*
- *SEO 3: Manage and continue to enhance 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.*
- *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.*

6.94 The landscape actions for the area are to Conserve and Create with the following landscape guidelines:

- *"Avoid siting any development on the highly prominent, elevated and very sparsely settled land in the elevated north and east. Conserve open, undeveloped skylines.*
- *Utilise dips in the landform, including valley slopes, and existing tree/woodland cover to integrate new development into the landscape.*
- *Protect and where possible enhance semi-natural habitats and networks, including pockets of ancient and riparian woodland*

- *(e.g. Hopwood Woodlands LNR), patches of dry heath and acid grassland, remnant semi-natural grasslands, ponds and flashes.*
- *Strengthen and restore the dry stone wall and hedgerow network in association with any new development, reflecting local characteristics (choice of stone and building style; hedgerow species and management regimes). Encourage the restoration of traditional boundaries where fencing is present.*
- *Ensure any new development does not dilute the strong field patterns associated with the landscape.*
- *Respect local building styles and materials in new housing developments, seeking to reflect these in their design and build (particularly the use of local gritstone).*
- *Conserve the character and setting of the Conservation Areas at Birch Village, Summerseat and the Macclesfield Canal, as well as the role the landscape plays as a rural setting to adjacent Conservation Areas.*
- *Conserve remaining industrial relicts, including disused railway lines, canals, mill buildings and the nationally designated Astley Green Colliery engine house and headgear.*
- *Protect the setting and integrity of the two moated sites within the LCT which are Scheduled Monuments.*
- *Explore opportunities to develop unused Brackley Municipal Golf Course, south of Farnworth, for habitat creation with possible links with The Northern Forest initiative.*
- *Explore opportunities to re-route the Rotary Way long distance footpath through Brackley Municipal Golf Course and thus avoid crossing over the M61.*
- *Design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development, addressing any changes in hydrology (and subsequent knock-on effects such as increased diffuse pollution from agricultural run-off). This landscape is part of the wider catchment of a number of Greater Manchester's main river valleys.*
- *Encourage woodland creation schemes on areas of low grade agricultural land, including through the Northern Forest initiative. Woodland planting along motorways and staggered blocks of planting should be used to help screen views of traffic and reduce noise.*
- *Conserve the rural road network, ensuring any new highway design minimises unnecessary signage and lighting and reflects local characteristics (e.g. road verges/boundaries).*
- *Protect the pockets of tranquillity and relative remoteness associated with the landscape, and the role the LCT plays as a rural backdrop and buffer between discrete urban areas.*
- *Conserve key views and intervisibility with the South/West Pennines and Dark Peak foothills, upland fringes and open moorlands."*

#### *Published Landscape Character Receptors*

- 6.95 On the basis of a comprehensive review of published landscape character assessments and analysis of the landscape character of the Site and its context, the following NCA and LCA have been identified against which effects resulting from the Development have been assessed.

- 6.96 An assessment of the receptor's value, susceptibility and resultant sensitivity to development of the type proposed has also been set out below. There are often subtle differences between and within individual LCAs that result in variations in both actual and perceived quality, condition, value and susceptibility to change. In addition to this, boundaries between LCAs do not always follow recognised landscape features such as rivers, settlement edges, roads or field boundaries. In these cases, the boundaries between LCAs are a transition, where there is a gradual change in character, that is often the case, with landscapes at the national and regional and district level.

*NCA 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe*

- 6.97 The NCA encompasses a transitional landscape between the open moorlands of the Dark Peak and South Pennines, which lie to the east and north, respectively, and the densely populated urban areas of the Manchester, which lie to the south and south-west. The NCA character is heavily influenced by its proximity to the adjacent Pennine Moors, and the deeply incised, steep valleys that characterise the transition from moorland to urban area. As a result, the majority of the countryside is influenced by recreational use relating to the adjacent urban areas and also by the diversification of farmland. The combination of river valleys, upland hinterland and proximity of urban development contribute to the area's distinct fringe character. The Site and local area are not covered by any national landscape designation – see Figure 6.1: Site Context Plan. The NCA is considered to reflect the typical degraded agricultural landscape found adjacent to urban areas, with the local landscape subject to change as a result of the major transport routes that pass adjacent to the Site boundaries. On this basis the NCA is considered to have Low value.
- 6.98 The nature and extent of the NCA and the existing landscape character is such that the character is typically compromised by the urban influences both physically and perceptually. There are few landscape features of note within the Site, with the majority of the Site being grassland. There is the potential to include mitigation as part of the Development in accordance with the published landscape guidelines. On this basis, the NCA is considered to have Low susceptibility to development of the type proposed. The NCA has the potential to accommodate development of the type proposed without fundamental or permanent changes to the wider NCA character. The combination of the above value and sensitivity is judged to result in a Medium overall sensitivity to development of the type proposed.

*LCA 27 Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green*

- 6.99 The LCA encompasses the majority of the study area and consists of a peri-urban landscape as part of the transition between the urban areas of Manchester to the south and Rochdale

to the north. The landscape has already been subject to notable changes as result of development, with a large industrial and distribution estate to the south, and major transport routes bounding the Site on three sides. The Existing settlement edge to Trub provides a clear urban influence on the setting which alongside the adjacent transport routes that provide an audible presence, reduce the perceived tranquillity of the Site. The LCA is not covered by any national landscape designations, and although the Site and the immediate area lie within the Green Belt, this is not a landscape designation and is covered further within paragraphs 6.192 to 6.200 of this chapter. Given the limited landscape features present within the Site, the LCA in the context of the Site is considered to have limited value. However, there are a number of PRoW that pass through the Site, and it is likely to have some local value. As such the value is considered to be Medium.

- 6.100 The LCA has a fractured pattern as a result of the sporadic nature and type of development with many detracting features, including large industrial development (notably Stakehill Industrial and Distribution Park) and major roads, that bound the Site. There is the potential to include mitigation as part of the Development in accordance with the published landscape guidelines. On this basis, the LCA is considered to have Medium susceptibility to development of the type proposed. The LCA has the potential to accommodate development of the type proposed without fundamental or permanent changes to the wider LCA character. The combination of the above value and sensitivity is judged to result in a Medium overall sensitivity to development of the type proposed.

**Table 6.2: Summary of Published Landscape Character Receptors**

| <b>Landscape Receptor</b>                          | <b>Value</b> | <b>Susceptibility</b> | <b>Sensitivity</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>NCA: 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe</i>           | Medium       | Medium                | Medium             |
| <i>LCA 27 Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green</i> | Medium       | Medium                | Medium             |

#### *Site Appraisal*

- 6.101 A landscape appraisal has been undertaken to ascertain the existing character of the Site. This is achieved through recording and analysing the existing landscape features and characteristics, the way the landscape is experienced, and the value or importance of the landscape and visual resources in the vicinity of the Site. The elements of the landscape that contribute to landscape character include the built and natural form, the pattern of features, detailing, scale, planting, land use and human perception. In this regard, landscape character is derived as a result of the perception of, and action and interaction of, natural and human factors.

- 6.102 The character and physical features of the Site are described below with reference to Site Appraisal Photographs (SAPs) A-H, included in Appendix 6.3 Site Appraisal Photographs. The locations of photographic viewpoints are illustrated on Figure 6.4: Site Appraisal Plan.
- 6.103 As shown on Figure 6.4, the Site comprises a series of unremarkable agricultural fields that have been subject to a degree of field rationalisation since the mid-20th Century (SAP A, C and F). The few remaining field boundaries are either in fair or poor condition and contain few trees (SAP G).
- 6.104 The Site as a whole is influenced by the adjacent residential development of Trub to the west (SAP B and H) and major transport routes, the M62 to the north and the A627 (M) that encloses the Site to the east and the south. Although the routes are in wooded cuttings there is an audible presence which reduces the tranquillity of the Site and local area. As the landform falls the Site becomes more enclosed, this is further strengthened by the existing built form and mature vegetation within the Site and immediate setting (SCP A and H).
- 6.105 The Site is unremarkable in terms of its landscape features, which are few and in poor condition. The most interesting elements of the Site are the views out, particularly from the higher ground to the north and western edges over the lower lying landform to the south, looking towards the Manchester city skyline (SAP C and G). Away from this higher ground, where the land falls away, views are limited to the Site and the higher ground of Tandle Hill Park which rises within the local landscape to the east (SAP E and F).
- 6.106 There are opportunities to restore a number of landscape characteristic features of the Site and the local area, including new native hedgerows with hedgerow trees, individual trees, tree belts and areas of woodland. The noted views from the higher ground within the north can be retained within areas of public open space as part of any development proposals.
- 6.107 The Site has no landscape designations and has been subject to significant neglect and loss of its historic landscape features which has resulted in a degraded landscape character. The Site is contained by development and transport infrastructure and is no more than typical of the urban fringe landscape as identified by the published landscape character assessments. It is of medium landscape sensitivity.

#### *Landscape Receptors*

- 6.108 On the basis of the Site Appraisal the following landscape features have been identified as receptors for the assessment of effects arising from the Development.

- 6.109 The value, susceptibility and resultant sensitivity of these landscape receptors are set out with full narrative in Appendix 6.4: Landscape Effects Table, with a summary set out in Table 6.3 below.

**Table 6.3: Summary of Site Level Landscape Receptors**

| <b>Receptor</b>                           | <b>Value</b> | <b>Susceptibility</b> | <b>Sensitivity</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Open Fields</i>                        | Medium       | Medium                | Medium             |
| <i>Hedgerows</i>                          | Low          | Low                   | Low                |
| <i>Canopy Trees</i>                       | Medium       | Medium                | Medium             |
| <i>Woodland</i>                           | Medium       | Medium                | Medium             |
| <i>Waterbodies</i>                        | Medium       | Low                   | Medium             |
| <i>The Site and its Immediate Context</i> | Medium       | Medium                | Medium             |

### **Visual Appraisal**

- 6.110 A visual appraisal was undertaken to determine the relationship of the Site with its surroundings and the approximate extent of its visibility within the wider landscape as experienced from publicly accessible viewpoints (roads, footways, PRoW and open spaces). The visibility of the Site is predominantly influenced by landform and the extent and type of vegetation cover and built elements within the surrounding landscape. Baseline studies of these features enabled the identification of the potential visibility of the Site from the surrounding area to be tested through fieldwork.
- 6.111 The SAPs and SCPs demonstrate that for the majority of views it is not possible to appreciate the Site as a whole from within the Site and from the surrounding landscape. This is a result of gently falling / undulating landform and screening provided by the intervening mature vegetation and built form alongside the limited number of visual receptors. The more elevated northern part of the Site, with the notable high ground within the north east, immediately north of Thornfields Farm, is the most visible part of the Site. It is also noted that the elevated land associated with Tandle Hill Country Park, being an exception, allows for views over the Site and beyond to the wider landscape - SCP20.
- 6.112 The Site is unremarkable in terms of its landscape features and is not covered by any landscape designations. Furthermore, it has been subject to significant neglect and loss of its landscape features with sections of field hedgerow replaced with post and wire fencing. The most interesting element of the Site is the landform with a small hill north of Thornfields Farm and the low depression within the southern part of the Site, south of Thornham Road, where the combination of landform and mature vegetation provide a sense of enclosure from the immediate, local, and wider area.

- 6.113 There are opportunities to restore the landscape character of the Site through the reinstatement of characteristic landscape features, including wildflower grassland, waterbodies, native hedgerows, trees and woodland. Important views towards the east towards Tandle Hill and south towards Manchester City Centre skyline, where they exist, should be protected and enhanced.
- 6.114 SCPs 1 – 5 demonstrate views from PRow Restricted Byway Rupp 30 and Footpath Mid FP3 that pass across the north eastern part of the Site. Receptors here experience views across the agricultural fields that currently define the Site's character with the Pennine Hills visible to the north west and skyline of Manchester visible in the distance to the south – SCP 1, 2, 3 4 and 5. Due to the landform and the loss of the field boundary vegetation within the Site, views from the more elevated northern part of the Site are more open, as the landform drops within the middle of the Site. However, views are lost of the lower lying southern and south western parts of the Site as a result of mature vegetation within the Site.
- 6.115 SCPs 6-7 demonstrate the nature of views available from the existing properties adjacent to the western edge of the Site, include the residents of Trub and Newhey Farm. The views look over the pastoral landscape which is open, the only defining features being the field hedgerows with the higher ground within the north of the Site visible in the centre of SCP6 and the higher ground of Tandle Hill in the centre of SCP7.
- 6.116 SCPs 8 and 9 demonstrate the range of potential views available from Footpath Mid FP7 which runs south from Newhey Farm, with the gently falling landform restricting views across the Site. The existing development located along Rochdale Road / A664 becomes more visible, with the series of high voltage overhead powerlines and associated pylons visible above and the woodland associated with Manchester Golf Course providing a verdant backdrop - SCP8. Views towards the higher ground to the north and east are limited to the higher ground near Thornfield Farm - SCP9.
- 6.117 SCP 10 – 13 are taken from along Thornham Lane that passes through the southern part of the Site. There are occasional glimpsed views into the Site from field gateways - SCP 10 and 11, with the majority of the route bounded by mature hedgerow which frames views along the lane – SCP12. As the landform rises to the east more elevated views are possible over the southern part of the Site and towards the Manchester City Centre Skyline - SCP13.
- 6.118 SCP 14 and 15 are taken within the south western part of the Site along Footpath Mid FP8, which runs between the existing development off Rochdale Road and St John Thronham Church. These views are more urban in nature and restricted to the immediate setting where residential development is set within a vegetated setting.

- 6.119 SCP 16 demonstrates views from Restricted Byway Rupp131 at the southern edge of the Site. The view is taken from a field gateway looking over a pastoral field to tree belt. Views beyond are heavily restricted with the higher ground within the north eastern part of the Site partially visible to the left of the view.
- 6.120 SCP 17 and 18 are taken from Restricted Byway Rupp130 and Footpath Mid Fp4, respectively, to the east of the Site. From here there are framed views towards and over the centre of the Site - SCP 17. As the landform rises further views over the Site towards the higher ground of the Pennines further to the west are possible – SCP18. However, as a result of the local landform in combination with the intervening mature vegetation associated with the A627 (M), views into the Site are heavily restricted.
- 6.121 SCP 19 is taken from along the Oldham Way to the south east of the Site. From this location the intervening landform and mature vegetation result in there being no views possible towards the Site.
- 6.122 SCP20 is taken from the higher ground within Tandle Hill Country Park, which allows for panoramic views. There are partial views of the Site which are viewed against the existing settlement edge where development is located on the lower lying landform set within a treed setting that filters and softens the views.
- 6.123 In summary, the Site is predominantly open, however the combination of landform both within the Site and local area, alongside mature vegetation and built form, limit the number of potential receptors. There is a strong agricultural character to the Site with the existing southern settlement edge of Trub glimpsed in close, mid and long range views. The character of the local and wider landscape is a combination of major road infrastructure that effectively wraps around three sides of the Site, with notable areas of existing development to north and south. The landscape to the west has been heavily influenced by both the historic development and grounds associated with Hopwood Hall, with the landscape currently laid as a golf course. Immediate and close range views of the Site occur from the PRow that run through the Site and properties that bound the Site boundaries, with further direct views over the Site possible from the higher ground within Tandle Hill Park to the east.
- 6.124 Due to the existing nature of the field hedgerows and paucity of canopy trees in the Site and the local vicinity there are open views over the centre of the Site from within. Beyond the Site boundaries views are heavily restricted by the combination of landform alongside built development and mature vegetation. Overall, this results in there being a limited appreciation of the Site given its overall size.

### *Visual Receptors*

- 6.125 On the basis of the visual appraisal, a series of visual receptors have been selected against which the effects of the Development on visual amenity have been assessed. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, as any visual receptors considered not to have the potential to experience significant visual effects have been scoped out. The value, susceptibility and resultant sensitivity of the visual receptors is set out with full narrative in Appendix 6.5 Visual Effects Table, with a summary set out in Table 6.4 below.

**Table 6.4: Summary of Visual Receptors**

| <b>Visual Receptor</b>                                                         | <b>Value</b> | <b>Susceptibility</b> | <b>Sensitivity</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Receptors using PRow within the Site</i>                                    | Low          | High                  | Medium             |
| <i>Residential properties adjacent to or in proximity to the Site boundary</i> | Low          | High                  | Medium             |
| <i>Users of the local PRow adjacent to the Site</i>                            | Low          | High                  | Medium             |
| <i>Users travelling along Thornham Lane</i>                                    | Low          | Medium                | Medium             |
| <i>Users of Tandle Hill Park Country Park</i>                                  | Medium       | High                  | High               |

### **Likely Significant Effects**

- 6.126 In this section an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Development has been undertaken during the construction phase and at Years 1 and 15. Table 5.1 in Chapter 5 sets out the indicative construction phasing.
- 6.127 The anticipated effects resulting from the Development at Year 1 of operation are based on the following information:
- Parameter Plan – (Figure 3.1); and
  - Illustrative Landscape Masterplan – (Figure 3.3).

### *Design of the Development (Embedded Mitigation Measures)*

- 6.128 This section of the ES Chapter sets out the attributes that are included within the design of the Development and are key elements of primary mitigation which have been taken into account in the assessment of landscape and visual effects. Primary mitigation is defined in GLVIA3 as measures that are “*developed through the iterative design process, which have become integrated or embedded into the project design*”. GLVIA3 also states that primary mitigation measures “*should ideally be included in the project description/specification*” as opposed to secondary mitigation measures, which are defined as “*those that are not built into the final development proposals and are considered in relation to the assessment of the*

*landscape and visual effects of the final development proposals and are considered in relation to the assessment of the landscape and visual effects of the scheme as the means of addressing the significant adverse effects identified".*

6.129 For the reasons set out above in best practice guidelines, embedded mitigation measures have been set out in detail below in advance of the assessment of effects. Any secondary mitigation taken into account in the assessment of residual effects is described in Paragraph 6.130 under the heading of 'Secondary Mitigation Measures'.

6.130 A full description of the Development is set out in Chapter 3 however the following characteristics are considered to be highly pertinent to landscape and visual effects.

6.131 Based on the robust landscape baseline analysis, including the Site and context appraisals, visual appraisal, and reviews of policy and published landscape character assessment and guidance, landscape mitigation measures have been included in the Development with the aim of reducing or avoiding adverse effects on landscape character and visual amenity. These are illustrated on Appendix 6.6: Landscape Strategy Plan, and include the following measures:

- Retention and enhancement of existing vegetation within the Site, where possible;
- Conserve hedgerows, creating new sections, where these are lost to development, gappy and in poor condition.
- Provide a soft green southern boundary to mitigate visual effects and retain the character of Thornham Lane;
- Provide a landscape buffer to the western boundary – retain and enhance the vegetated boundary, extend woodland planting within the western slopes of the Site to create a green corridor and increase the presence of this key landscape characteristic;
- Retain and increase public access through retention of the existing PRoW network that is enhanced with further footpaths and cycleways;
- Improve biodiversity across the Site by introducing a variety of ecological habitats to include broadleaved woodland blocks; species-rich hedgerows; native tree planting; grassland meadows; ponds and wetland habitats; street trees; native garden planting; and garden trees;
- Create opportunities for native tree planting throughout the Development to increase canopy cover in the area;
- Provide opportunities for viewpoints that take in the higher ground of Tandle Hill Park and war memorial to the east and towards the Manchester city centre skyline to the south; and

- Set development back from the more visual sensitive higher ground to the north east and provide an appropriate buffer to St John Thornham Church to the south west.

### *Construction Phase*

6.132 The anticipated effects resulting from the Development at Year 15 of operation are based on the successful establishment of proposed planting, following the landscape maintenance specifications outlined on the Appendix 6.6: Landscape Strategy Plan.

6.133 The principal activities that will have an effect upon landscape character, landscape features and visual amenity during the construction phase include:

- The loss of openness and alterations to the existing appearance of the Site;
- The introduction of new temporary elements, including material stockpiles, welfare facilities, plant and machinery and construction site lighting;
- Groundworks, topsoil stripping and excavation for ancillary structures and cables;
- The noise and movement of plant and machinery within the Site and the surrounding landscape, including crane activities and construction traffic on local roads;
- Removal of limited sections of hedgerow and trees; and
- The building and emergence of new built forms, including panels, ancillary structures and fencing.

6.134 The construction of the Development is anticipated to commence in Spring 2024 subject to gaining planning permission and span approximately 14 years. Overall, construction is expected to be completed by 2038.

### *Landscape effects*

6.135 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in Appendix 6.4: Landscape Effects Table. A summary of the effects identified is set out below.

6.136 Three landscape receptors are likely to experience effects that are considered significant (i.e. typically effects that are either major or moderate significance) as a result of the completed Development.

6.137 *Open Fields* will be subject to a Moderate - Major Adverse effect as a result of the noticeable change and loss of its openness and simple agricultural character.

- 6.138 *Hedgerows* will be subject to a Major Adverse effect as there will be around an 80% loss in existing hedgerow.
- 6.139 The character of *The Site and its Immediate Context* will also be subject to a Moderate – Major Adverse effect due to the change from agricultural land to residential development.
- 6.140 The remainder of landscape receptors will be subject to adverse effects that are of minor or negligible significance, or neutral, including:
- *NCA54* the Development will occupy a small central part of the much larger NCA – Minor Adverse effect;
  - *LCA27* will result in a very limited direct effect on the overall area - Minor Adverse effect;
  - *Canopy Trees* will be subject to a Negligible Adverse effect as there are few existing internal trees, and therefore a very limited loss;
  - *Woodland* will be subject to a Negligible Adverse effect as there will be very limited loss due to the existing woodland being located around the periphery of the Site, which will be protected during the construction phase; and
  - *Waterbodies* will be subject to a Neutral effect as all existing waterbodies will be retained.

#### *Visual Effects*

- 6.141 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in Appendix 6.5 Visual Effects Table. A summary of the effects identified is set out below.
- 6.142 There are a number of visual receptors that are likely to experience effects that are considered significant (i.e. typically effects that are either major or moderate significance) as a result of the construction activities.
- 6.143 *Users of PRow within the Site* will experience a Moderate - Major Adverse effect on the open, close range views of the construction activities and emerging Development as the PRow passes through the Site.
- 6.144 *Residents of properties adjacent to or in proximity to the Site* will have views of the construction activities and emerging Development that will replace the open views across the Site, especially those that bound the western part of the Site, resulting in a Moderate Adverse effect.

- 6.145 *Users of Tandle Hill Park* will experience a Major-Moderate Adverse effect on the panoramic views from higher ground of the construction activities and emerging Development, views from the wider park are heavily retracted by landform and mature woodland.
- 6.146 The identified visual receptors will be subject to adverse effects that are minor and are not considered to be significant, including:
- *Users travelling along Thornham Lane* - construction phase will be glimpsed through breaks in the mature roadside vegetation with hoarding to the Site boundary screening some of the ground level activities from view – Minor Adverse effect; *and*
  - *Users of the local PRow adjacent to the Site* – there will be only glimpsed / partial views of construction activities through breaks in the vegetation and / or field gateways - Minor Adverse effect.

#### Operational Phase (Year 1)

#### *Landscape Effects*

- 6.147 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of effects for the receptors is set out in Appendix 6.2 Landscape Effects Table. A summary of the effects identified, including key narrative for any significant effects is set out below.
- 6.148 Three landscape receptors are likely to experience effects that are considered significant (i.e. typically effects that are either major or moderate significance) as a result of the completed Development.
- 6.149 *Open Fields* will be subject to a Major – Moderate Adverse effect as a result of the noticeable change and loss of its openness and simple agricultural character.
- 6.150 *Hedgerows* will be subject to a Moderate Adverse effect as although over 5km of new hedgerow will be planted it will provide little in the way of benefit due to it being immature.
- 6.151 *The Site and its Immediate Context* will be subject to a Major-Moderate Adverse effect as the landscape strategy will not have matured.
- 6.152 The remainder of landscape receptors will be subject to either adverse or beneficial effects that are of minor or negligible significance including:

- *NCA54* the development will occupy a small central part of the much larger NCA – Negligible Adverse effect;
- *LCA27* will result in a very limited direct effect on the overall area – Minor Adverse effect;
- *Canopy Trees* will be subject to a Negligible Beneficial effect as there will be over 400 new trees planted within public open space and along the streets;
- *Woodland* will be subject to a Negligible Beneficial effect as there will 14.5ha of new woodland planted, albeit this will provide a limited contribution at year 1 as the planting will not have matured; and
- *Waterbodies* will be subject to a Negligible Beneficial effect as there will be the creation of around 1.5ha of new permanently wet SuDs features with enhanced wetland habitats, however, this will not have established at year 1.

### *Visual Effects*

- 6.153 There are a number of visual receptors that are likely to experience effects that are considered significant (i.e. typically effects that are either major or moderate significance) as a result of the completed Development.
- 6.154 *Users of PRow within the Site* will experience a Major Adverse effect due to the change in views as the PRow will pass through residential development, changing the character of the views and with the landscape strategy not having established.
- 6.155 *Residents of properties adjacent to or in proximity to the Site* will experience a Moderate Adverse effect as views will take in residential development set adjacent to their rear gardens or beyond an area of public open space that replaces the current open views across the Site.
- 6.156 *Users of Tandle Hill Park* will experience a Moderate Adverse effect on the panoramic views from higher ground of the completed residential estate that will replace the existing filtered views of the settlement edge to the west of the Site, with the proposed planting providing little in the way of mitigation.
- 6.157 The remainder of visual receptors will be subject to adverse effects that are of minor significance including:
- *Users travelling along Thornham Lane* – new residential development will be glimpsed through breaks in the mature roadside vegetation with the proposed landscape planting providing little mitigation at year 1 – Minor Adverse effect; and

- *Users of the local PRow adjacent to the Site* – there will be only glimpsed / partial views of the Development through breaks in the vegetation and / or field gateways - Minor Adverse effect.

#### Additional Mitigation Measures

6.158 The following additional mitigation measures (secondary mitigation) are proposed for landscape and visual effects relating to the construction stage. These measures are generally considered to be construction industry standard and would be implemented through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) as set out in Chapter 5, which would be secured through a suitable worded planning condition.

- Existing vegetation on and around the Site will be protected from damage in accordance with BS 5837: 2012<sup>xii</sup>;
- Hours of work on the Site would be limited to 08.00 – 18.00 hours Monday to Friday; 09.00 – 14.00 hours Saturday; and no time on Sundays, Bank Holidays or Public Holidays, thereby limiting the extent to which construction activities will affect receptors on a daily or weekly basis;
- All unloading of construction materials and equipment would be provided within the Site boundary, limiting adverse effects on character and views due to activities outside of the Site;
- Noise, dirt and dust levels would be kept to a minimum and local road would be cleaned regularly where dirt is spread by construction traffic, limiting adverse effects on local character due to the perception of construction activities; and
- Litter within and around the Site will be removed and the Site will be kept free from litter throughout construction activities.

6.159 Whilst the above measures would assist in reducing the perceived adverse effects of the construction of the Development, the primary cause of adverse effects is considered to be the loss of openness changes to the physical fabric of the landscape. As such the secondary mitigation measures set out above will not alter the landscape and visual effects identified in Paragraphs 6.132-154.

6.160 In terms of operational effects, the establishment and growth of planting proposals and their ongoing maintenance and the management of existing landscape features are considered as further mitigation measures (secondary mitigation) and form the basis of the assessment of residual landscape and visual effects of the Development during the operational phase at Year 15.

## Residual Effects

### Construction Phase

- 6.161 As set out above, the residual effects resulting from the construction of the Development are unlikely to differ in magnitude or significance from those identified with respect to embedded mitigation measures alone.

### *Landscape effects*

- 6.162 The majority of landscape receptors are likely to experience residual effects that are considered significant (i.e. typically effects that are either major or moderate significance) as a result of the completed Development.
- 6.163 *Open Fields* will be subject to a Moderate Adverse residual effect as a result of the noticeable change and loss of its openness and simple agricultural character.
- 6.164 *Hedgerows* will be subject to a Major Adverse residual effect as there will be around an 80% loss in existing hedgerow.
- 6.165 The character of *The Site and its Immediate Context* will also be subject to a Moderate – Major Adverse residual effect due to the change from agricultural land to residential development.
- 6.166 The remainder of landscape receptors will be subject to residual adverse effects that are of minor or negligible significance, or neutral, including:
- *NCA54* the Development will occupy a small central part of the much larger NCA - Minor Adverse residual effect;
  - *LCA27* will result in a very limited direct effect on the overall area - Minor Adverse residual effect;
  - *Canopy Trees* will be subject to a Negligible Adverse residual effect as there are few existing internal trees, and therefore a very limited loss;
  - *Woodland* will be subject to a Negligible Adverse residual effect as there will be very limited loss due to the existing woodland being located around the periphery of the Site, which will be protected during the construction phase; and

- *Waterbodies* will be subject to a Neutral residual effect as all existing waterbodies will be retained.

### *Visual Effects*

- 6.167 Full explanatory commentary on the magnitude and significance of residual effects for the receptors is set out in Appendix 6.5 Visual Effects Table. A summary of the effects identified is set out below.
- 6.168 There are a number of visual receptors that are likely to experience residual effects that are considered significant (i.e. typically effects that are either major or moderate significance) as a result of the construction activities.
- 6.169 *Users of PRow within the Site* will experience a Moderate - Major Adverse residual effect on the open, close range views of the construction activities and emerging Development as the PRow passes through the Site.
- 6.170 *Residents of properties adjacent to or in proximity to the Site* will have views of the construction activities and emerging Development that will replace the open views across the Site, especially those that bound the western part of the Site, resulting in a Moderate Adverse residual effect.
- 6.171 *Users of Tandle Hill Park* will experience a Major-Moderate Adverse residual effect on the panoramic views from higher ground of the construction activities and emerging Development, views from the wider park are heavily retracted by landform and mature woodland.
- 6.172 The identified visual receptors will be subject to adverse residual effects that are either minor effects, and are not considered to be significant, including:
- *Users travelling along Thornham Lane* – the construction phase will be glimpsed through breaks in the mature roadside vegetation with hoarding to the Site boundary screening some of the ground level activities from view – Minor Adverse residual effect; *and*
  - *Users of the local PRow adjacent to the Site* – there will be only glimpsed / partial views of construction activities through breaks in the vegetation and / or field gateways - Minor Adverse residual effect.

## Completed Development

- 6.173 The following section summarises the anticipated residual effects of the Development on landscape and visual receptors at Year 15 of operation (i.e., 15 years after construction of the Development has been completed). These judgements take into account the successful establishment of all proposed planting across the Site, and the enhanced management of existing landscape features.

## Landscape Effects

- 6.174 Three landscape receptors are considered likely to experience significant residual effects (i.e. moderate or major adverse effect) as a result of the completed Development.
- 6.175 *Open Fields* will be subject to a Moderate Adverse residual effect as a result of the noticeable change and loss of its openness and simple agricultural character.
- 6.176 *Woodland* will be subject to a Moderate Beneficial residual effect as there will 14.5ha of new woodland planted which at year 15 would have matured enhancing the existing woodland setting.
- 6.177 *Canopy Trees* will increase across the Site, circa 400-500 trees, which once mature will provide a verdant character with increase canopy cover, which reflect the local character – Moderate Beneficial residual effect.
- 6.178 The identified landscape receptors listed below will be subject to adverse or beneficial residual effects that are either minor or negligible, and therefore are not considered to be significant, including:
- *Hedgerows* – over 5,000 m of new hedgerow planting, now mature – Minor Adverse residual effect;
  - *Site and Immediate context* – the landscape scheme will have matured to provide an enhanced landscape setting that compliments the local landscape and settlement edge - Minor Adverse residual effect;
  - *NCA54* - the Development will occupy a small central part of the much larger NCA – Negligible Adverse residual effect;
  - *LCA27* will result in a very limited direct effect on the overall area - Negligible Adverse residual effect; and

- *Waterbodies* will be subject to a Minor Beneficial residual effect as the 1.5ha of new permanently wet SuDs features with enhanced wetland habitats would have matured.

#### Visual Effects

- 6.179 A single visual receptor is considered likely to experience significant residual effects (i.e. moderate or major adverse effect) as a result of the completed Development.
- 6.180 *Users of PRow within the Site* will experience a Moderate Adverse residual effect due to the change in views as the PRow will pass through residential development, changing the character of the views and with the landscape strategy having established softening views of the Development.
- 6.181 No further visual receptors are considered likely to experience significant residual effects following establishment of proposed planting at Year 15. However, visual receptors will be subject to adverse residual effects that are either moderate- minor, minor or negligible effects, and not considered to be significant, including:
- *Residents of properties adjacent to or in proximity to the Site* – vegetation will have matured and softened / filtered views of the Development beyond an area of public open space – Minor Adverse residual effect;
  - *Users travelling along Thornham Lane* – new residential development will be glimpsed through breaks in the mature roadside vegetation – Negligible Adverse residual effect;
  - *Users of the local PRow adjacent to the Site* – there will be only glimpsed / partial views of the Development through breaks in the vegetation and / or field gateways – Negligible Adverse residual effect; and
  - *Users of Tandle Hill Park* will experience a Moderate – Minor Adverse residual effect on the panoramic views from higher ground as the Development would be located within a mature landscape that would soften and filter views that reflect the existing settlement edge.

### **Cumulative Effects**

- 6.182 The following section of this chapter assesses the likely significant landscape and visual effects of the Development in combination with other landscape and visual effects of cumulative developments as listed within Chapter 2 EIA Methodology of the ES.
- 6.183 Only those schemes considered to have the potential to result in significant landscape and visual effects in combination with the Development have been included in the scope of the cumulative assessment. Those schemes that are considered unlikely to result in cumulative effects (due to type of development, distance from the Site, scale or lack of intervisibility) have been scoped out of this assessment.
- 6.184 Similarly, only those receptors considered likely to experience cumulative effects are included in this assessment. Receptors that are considered unlikely to experience significant effects have been scoped out.
- 6.185 In terms of landscape features (i.e. Open Fields, Hedgerows, and Canopy Trees), for the purposes of the assessment these receptors are entirely contained within the Site's boundaries. Therefore, no cumulative effects will occur as these receptors will not be affected by the cumulative schemes.
- 6.186 As set out in Chapter 2 EIA Methodology, a review of current planning applications has identified the following schemes in the vicinity of the Site, all of which fall within the study area as shown on Figure 6.1 Site Context Plan. These are outlined in Table 2.6 of Chapter 2 of this ES.

#### **Construction Phase**

#### *Landscape Effects*

- 6.187 The following landscape receptors are considered to have the potential for significant cumulative effects as a result of the completed Development in cumulation with the identified cumulative schemes:
- LCA 27 Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green; and
  - The Site and its Immediate Context.
- 6.188 The Development alongside the schemes at Land south of Cowm Top Lane, Land Bound By

Manchester Road, Hareshill Road And Pilsworth Road West Of Junction 19 Of The M62 and Land At Hollin Lane (although only a small percentage of the site lies within the LCA) will result in direct changes to the central and western extent of LCA 27 Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green as they will result in the loss of green field land. The other cumulative schemes are for the redevelopment of brownfield land and therefore would not result in the loss of undeveloped land. Furthermore, the redevelopment of this brownfield land would provide some beneficial cumulative effects.

6.189 The landscape character of these sites is typical of the LCA, consisting of agricultural land set adjacent to the existing settlement edge. The fields are for the most part bounded by mature hedgerows with hedgerow trees, although the field sizes are smaller within the Land south of Cowm Top Lane scheme. The existing limited intervisibility between the sites, as a result of the intervening landform in combination with the mature vegetation framework, limits the perceived overall scale and extent of the sites within the landscape. The fieldscape will be subject to construction operations with the introduction of new built elements including the compound, hard standing, plant and equipment. The existing simple agricultural character of the fields will be disrupted, with a variation in the intensity of activity as the construction of the Development progresses. The existing fieldscape will be lost to development, resulting in a change to this receptor. Due to the extent of the LCA it is considered that the construction effects would amount to a limited deterioration. On this basis, the cumulative effect during construction is judged to have a Small magnitude of effect on the LCA, which in combination with the medium sensitivity of the receptor results in a Minor Adverse cumulative effect.

6.190 Given the proximity of both the Development and the cumulative scheme at Land south of Cowm Top Lane, there is the potential for cumulative effects on the local context. The nature and influence of the change would be limited as a result of the intervening M6 major transport corridor and associated landscaping. The cumulative effects of both schemes on this receptor are not considered to exceed that identified for the Development on its own and therefore the cumulative effect is considered to be Minor Adverse.

#### Visual effects

6.191 Due to the nature of the landform alongside the intervening mature vegetation and built form, there is no intervisibility between the cumulative schemes and the Site with the exception of the high ground within the Tandle Hill Park. From this elevated viewpoint there are partial views over the Site with Land south of Cowm Top Lane, Castleton, glimpsed to the north, as such there is potential for limited combined cumulative effects that are considered to be Negligible Adverse. Given the nature of the existing road network and associated mature vegetation, the potential for sequential glimpsed views of the Development and Land south

of Cown Top Lane, Castleton to the east is heavily restricted, with potential glimpsed winter views possible from the elevated Thornham Interchange / junction 20 of the M6. There would be fleeting glimpsed views of the developments beyond the adjacent mature vegetation the bounds the roadway. Given the limited nature and duration of these views and the prevailing character it is considered that sequential cumulative effects would be neutral.

#### GREEN BELT REVIEW

6.192 The Site is currently located within the Greater Manchester Greenbelt. The existing Green Belt boundary is defined locally by the M6 to the north of the Site and the edge of the existing industrial estate within the local landscape to the south. The settlement of Trub is located outside of the Green Belt.

6.193 The assessment identifies the Site as being located within Sub Area RD56, which encompasses the Site, plus an area of land located to the north west of the Site, between the existing settlement and the M6, and which also extends further south west to take in the properties along A664.

6.194 With respect to the NPPF purposes, RD56 is rated as the following.

- Purposes 1a – Strong
- Purposes 1b – Moderate
- Purpose 2 – Strong
- Purpose 3 – Strong
- Purpose 4 – No Contribution
- Purpose 5 – “....It is difficult to distinguish the extent to which each Green Belt parcels delivers against this purpose and therefore this study will not undertake a parcel by parcel assessment of the contribution made in relation to Purpose 5.”

6.195 The assessment identifies that RD56 meets the Green Belt purpose criteria *Strong to moderate* and forms an important gap between the settlements of Castleton and Middleton. However, it goes on to state that *"the parcel has significant and durable barrier features with the M62 motorway on the northern border and the A627 (M) on the eastern and southern border. These play a strong role inhibiting urban sprawl occurring within the parcel...."*

*Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study Addendum: Assessment of Proposed 2021 PfE Plan Allocations – July 2021*

- 6.196 As part of the PfE evidence base LUC carried out the Stage 2 Greater Manchester Green Belt Study Addendum: Assessment of Proposed 2021 PfE Plan Allocations – July 2021 – see Appendix 6.7. The Site and land south of the A627 (M), which wraps around the northern and eastern edge of Stakehill Industrial Estate is assessed as LUC Allocation Reference GM2. The analysis of the assessment within the study states:

*"The release of any of the land to the south of Stakehill Distribution Park, area GM2-4, was previously assessed as causing high harm to the Green Belt purposes. The land here makes a strong contribution to Green Belt Purpose 1 (checking the sprawl of a large built-up area) and Purpose 3 (safeguarding the countryside from encroachment), with Boarshaw Lane and a tree belt along the edge of the Distribution Park forming a fairly strong boundary to the rising land to the south-east. The retention of a slightly broader belt of land between Stakehill and Chadderton Fold will help to retain distinction between the two urban areas, but the revised release would still constitute a minor impact on the adjacent Green Belt, through containment of remaining land in the settlement gap, so the harm rating is still high."*

- 6.197 The assessment is broadly agreed by BWnS, on the basis that the parcel appears to make a contribution to the Green Belt on the basis of providing a gap between the existing settlements and restricting urban sprawl. However, the current settlement pattern extends along the western Site boundary. There are currently robust and permanent boundaries associated with the parcel with the M6 and A627 (M) bounding the parcel to the north, east and south, respectively.
- 6.198 The NPPF states that the key characteristics of the Green Belt are *"their openness and their permanence"*. The character of the Green Belt in the vicinity of the Site has been the subject to various stages of Green Belt review by HBC.
- 6.199 The Development would cause a loss of countryside, however much of this is influenced by its existing urban fringe context. Whilst parts of the Site have a visual relationship with the wider arable landscape, in places the Site exhibits only a limited perception of openness due to the limited extent of visual connection to the wider landscape. The visual relationship between the Site and the local countryside that forms the Site's immediate surroundings to the east, south and west is limited as a result of the major transport routes that bound the Site, the existing development to the west and the limited number of visual receptors. The Development of the would retain a substantial proportion of the Site (50%) as active or passive open space, providing improved access to the surrounding countryside and Green Belt.

- 6.200 It is therefore considered that the Green Belt boundary could logically be re-drawn to exclude the Site from the Green Belt and that a robust new Green Belt boundary would readily be established using the M6 and A627 (M) transport corridors to the north, east and south of the Site, which form distinct barriers between the Site and the immediate, local and wider landscape. Whilst by definition 'inappropriate development' in the Green Belt, the Development has been designed to carefully locate development and provide suitable mitigation to reduce harm to the Green Belt purposes, in accordance with paragraph 145 of the NPPF.

### **Summary**

- 6.201 An assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects arising from the Development has been undertaken in accordance with the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition.
- 6.202 Review and analysis of national and district level published landscape character assessments has been carried out. They describe a rolling elevated landscape, with variable land uses, 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. Field boundaries comprise often gappy, species-poor hedgerows with occasional established clumps of hedgerow trees, although, post and wire fencing replace hedges in many locations. The open farmland contrasts strongly with adjoining residential and industrial urban areas, however, frequent recreational land uses with sports fields and golf courses are located close to the urban edge. The manicured lush greens of the courses contrast sharply with areas of semi-improved grazing land.
- 6.203 Guidance set out in published character assessments includes measures to manage, enhance and expand the network of green infrastructure, strengthen and restore the hedgerow network, conserve and enhance or replant woodlands, and design-in the introduction of SuDS to any new development.
- 6.204 A landscape appraisal has been undertaken to ascertain the existing character of the Site. The Site comprises a series of unremarkable agricultural fields that have been subject to a degree of field rationalisation since the mid-20th Century with the few remaining field boundaries either in fair or poor condition and contain few hedgerow trees. The Site as a whole is influenced by the adjacent residential development of Trub to the west and major transport routes, the M62 to the north and the A627 (M) that encloses the Site to the east and the south. Although these routes are located in wooded cuttings, there is an audible presence which reduces the tranquillity of the Site and local area.

- 6.205 As the landform falls the Site becomes more enclosed, this is further strengthened by the existing built form and mature vegetation within the Site and immediate setting.
- 6.206 The Site is unremarkable in terms of its landscape features, which are few and in poor condition. The most interesting elements of the Site are the views out, particularly from the higher ground to the north and western edges over the lower lying landform to the south, looking towards the Manchester city skyline. Away from this higher ground, where the land falls away, views are limited to the Site and the higher ground of Tandle Hill Park which rises within the local landscape to the east.
- 6.207 There are opportunities to restore a number of landscape characteristic features of the Site and the local area, including new native hedgerows with hedgerow trees, individual trees, tree belts and areas of woodland. The noted views from the higher ground within the north can be retained within areas of public open space as part of any development proposals.
- 6.208 The Site has no landscape designations and has been subject to significant neglect and loss of its historic landscape features which has resulted in a degraded landscape character. The Site is contained by development and transport infrastructure and is no more than typical of the urban fringe landscape as identified by the published landscape character assessments. It is of medium landscape sensitivity.
- 6.209 A comprehensive series of mitigation measures has been embedded in the design of the Development from the outset, with the aim of reducing adverse effects resulting from its introduction. The design of the Development has evolved as part of an iterative process and has been informed by the findings of the baseline landscape and visual amenity conditions.
- 6.210 An assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the Development has been undertaken during the construction phase and at Years 1 and 15 of the operational phase.
- 6.211 During the construction phase, three landscape receptors have been identified as being likely to experience significant Major to Moderate Adverse effects, as a result of a direct change to the Site from the construction activities. These will result in a loss of open fields, section of field boundary hedgerow and therefore the overall character of the Site perceived from within or adjacent to the Site. This will also result in there being a number of visual receptors that will experience significant Major – Moderate to Moderate Adverse effects, these include the users of the PRoW within the Site, residents that live adjacent to or in proximity to the Site boundary and users of Tandle Hill Park to the east, although these are limited to the higher ground.

- 6.212 At Year 1 of operation, three receptors have been identified as being likely to experience significant effects, the loss of open fields will result in a Moderate Adverse effect, however, the establishment of 14,5ha of woodland and around 400-500 canopy trees would result in there being a moderate beneficial effect to these features. As a result, only a single visual receptor, users of the PRow within the Site, are considered to have a Moderate Adverse effect (significant) as the completed Development will alter the nature of views. Following the implementation and establishment of the comprehensive landscape mitigation strategy that accompanies the Development, the majority of adverse effects will diminish rapidly as proposed planting establishes, such that at Year 15.
- 6.213 With respect to cumulative effects, the Development has been assessed alongside the schemes at Land south of Cowm Top Lane, Land Bound By Manchester Road, Hareshill Road And Pilsworth Road West Of Junction 19 Of The M62 and Land At Hollin Lane (although only a small percentage of the site lies within the LCA). There will be direct changes to the central and western extent of LCA 27 *Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green* as they will result in the loss of green field land. The other cumulative schemes are for the redevelopment of brownfield land and therefore would not result in the loss of undeveloped land. Furthermore, on this basis, the cumulative effect during construction is judged to have a Small magnitude of effect on the LCA, which in combination with the medium sensitivity of the receptor would result in a Minor Adverse cumulative effect. The development of this brownfield land would provide some beneficial cumulative effects during operation.
- 6.214 Given the proximity of both the Development and Land south of Cowm Top Lane, there is the potential for cumulative effects on the local context. The cumulative effects of both schemes on this receptor are not considered to exceed that identified for the Development on its own and therefore the cumulative effect is considered to be Minor Adverse.
- 6.215 Due to the nature of the landform alongside the intervening mature vegetation and built form, there is no intervisibility between the cumulative schemes and the Site with the exception of the high ground within the Tandle Hill Park and the elevated road network. Given the nature and duration of these views and the prevailing character it is considered that sequential cumulative effects are considered to be Negligible Adverse to neutral, respectively.
- 6.216 The Development has been designed to integrate into the gently undulating landscape with buffers from visually sensitive residential dwellings, PRow and roads. The Development includes a mitigation strategy that reinforces the characteristic landscape pattern through extensive native woodland, tree, shrub and hedgerow planting as a means to softening and integrating the Development. This proposed planting has been designed to increase connectivity and expand existing woodlands, trees and notable areas of wildflower grassland,

with the inclusion of a Country Park within the southern part of the Site. The proposed enhanced vegetation framework will provide a higher degree of containment to the Development once established.

- 6.217 The landscape strategy includes measures that will not only mitigate effects but provide enhancements to the existing character and ecological value of the Site, creating a more diverse range of habitats, with the current agricultural use replaced by areas of open space and parkland that will provide benefits in terms of recreation and wildlife.
- 6.218 Whilst the Development will result in adverse effects on landscape and visual receptors, these effects are limited by the combination of the existing landform alongside the existing and proposed vegetation framework and inherent characteristics of the type of development in general. Furthermore, through the iterative LVIA process, the layout of the Development and the formulation of a comprehensive landscape mitigation strategy have been guided by a robust understanding and analysis of the Site and its landscape and visual context, with the aim of reducing or where possible avoiding significant landscape and visual effects.
- 6.219 As a result, the majority of residual adverse effects can be reduced to a level that is not significant. Where there is still a significant effect this is due to the loss of the open fields as they will be lost through development and the change in views from the PRoW within the Site that will now experience views set within an urban context. However, the Development provides tangible and beneficial significant effect on the landscape character of the Site in the long term.
- 6.220 In landscape terms, the Development is therefore considered to be in accordance with national and local policy, as well as guidance set out in published landscape character assessments. Furthermore, the Site is considered to have the capacity to accommodate the Development without undue or unacceptable effects on landscape character and visual amenity, and with the potential for considerable improvements to the landscape structure of the Site itself, which will in the long term provide a beneficial effect.
- 6.221 Table 6.5 contains a summary of the likely significant effects of the Development.

**Table 6.5: Table of Significance**

| Potential Effect                     | Nature of Effect<br>(Permanent/<br>Temporary) | Significance<br>(Major/Moderate/Minor)<br>(Beneficial/Adverse/<br>Negligible) | Mitigation /<br>Enhancement Measures                                              | Geographical<br>Importance* |    |   |   |   |   |                               | Residual Effects<br>(Major/Moderate/Minor)<br>(Beneficial/Adverse/Negligible) |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----|---|---|---|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      |                                               |                                                                               |                                                                                   | I                           | UK | E | R | C | B | L                             |                                                                               |
| Construction                         |                                               |                                                                               |                                                                                   |                             |    |   |   |   |   |                               |                                                                               |
| Effects on<br>Landscape Features     | Temporary                                     | Major Adverse – Neutral                                                       | Protection of retained<br>planting.                                               |                             |    |   |   |   |   | x                             | Major Adverse - Neutral                                                       |
| Effects on<br>Landscape<br>Character | Temporary                                     | Minor Adverse                                                                 | Implementation of the<br>CEMP.                                                    |                             |    |   |   |   |   | x                             | Minor Adverse                                                                 |
| Effects on Visual<br>Receptors       | Temporary                                     | Major - Moderate – Minor<br>Adverse                                           | Landscape planting to<br>provide buffers/ offsets to<br>visually sensitive edges. |                             |    |   |   |   | x | x                             | Major - Moderate – Minor Adverse                                              |
| Completed Development                |                                               |                                                                               |                                                                                   |                             |    |   |   |   |   |                               |                                                                               |
| Effects on<br>Landscape Features     | Permanent                                     | Moderate Adverse – Moderate<br>Beneficial                                     | Maturation and<br>maintenance of the<br>landscape mitigation<br>planting.         |                             |    |   |   |   |   | x                             | Moderate Adverse – Moderate<br>Beneficial                                     |
| Effects on<br>Landscape<br>Character | Permanent                                     | Negligible Adverse                                                            |                                                                                   |                             |    |   |   |   |   | x                             | Negligible Adverse                                                            |
| Effects on Visual<br>Receptors       | Permanent                                     | Moderate – Negligible<br>Adverse                                              |                                                                                   |                             |    |   |   | x | x | Moderate – Negligible Adverse |                                                                               |
| Cumulative Effects                   |                                               |                                                                               |                                                                                   |                             |    |   |   |   |   |                               |                                                                               |
| Construction                         |                                               |                                                                               |                                                                                   |                             |    |   |   |   |   |                               |                                                                               |
| Effects on<br>Landscape Features     | Temporary                                     | Neutral                                                                       | Protection of retained and<br>new mature planting.                                |                             |    |   |   |   |   | x                             | Neutral                                                                       |
| Effects on<br>Landscape<br>Character | Temporary                                     | Minor – Negligible Adverse                                                    | Implementation of the<br>CEMP.                                                    |                             |    |   |   |   |   | x                             | Minor – Negligible Adverse                                                    |
| Effects on Visual<br>Receptors       | Temporary                                     | Minor - Negligible Adverse /<br>Neutral                                       | Landscape planting to<br>provide buffers/ offsets to<br>visually sensitive edges. |                             |    |   |   |   | x | x                             | Minor - Negligible Adverse / Neutral                                          |
| Completed Development                |                                               |                                                                               |                                                                                   |                             |    |   |   |   |   |                               |                                                                               |
| Effects on<br>Landscape Features     | Temporary                                     | Neutral                                                                       | Protection of retained and<br>new mature planting.                                |                             |    |   |   |   |   | x                             | Neutral                                                                       |

|                                |           |                            |                                                                              |  |  |  |  |  |  |   |   |                            |
|--------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|---|---|----------------------------|
| Effects on Landscape Character | Temporary | Minor Adverse              | Maturation and maintenance of the landscape mitigation planting.             |  |  |  |  |  |  |   | x | Minor Adverse              |
| Effects on Visual Receptors    | Temporary | Minor - Negligible Adverse | Landscape planting to provide buffers / offsets to visually sensitive edges. |  |  |  |  |  |  | x | x | Minor - Negligible Adverse |

**\* Geographical Level of Importance**

I = International; UK = United Kingdom; E = England; R = Regional; C = County; B = Borough; L = Local

## REFERENCES

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- <sup>i</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021), *National Planning Policy Framework*, <<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>>.
- <sup>ii</sup> Department for Communities & Local Government (2021), *Planning Practice Guidance*, <[www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance)>.
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- <sup>iv</sup> Natural England (2014), *An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment*, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types>>.
- <sup>v</sup> Rochdale Borough Council (2016), *Rochdale Adopted Core Strategy*, <<https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/downloads/download/266/core-strategy>>.
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- <sup>vii</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/places-for-everyone/>
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- <sup>ix</sup> Rochdale Borough Council (2013), *Rochdale Township Green Infrastructure Action Plan*, <<https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/downloads/download/411/green-infrastructure-action-plans>>.
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- <sup>xii</sup> <https://www.malvern hills.gov.uk/planning/heritage/the-natural-environment/trees-and-development/bs-5837-2012>