

## Appendix 2: Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA)

### Landscape Classification

The Unitary Development Plan (saved) classes the land as Settled Farmlands which is characterised by:

- more domesticated farmscape with occasional small settlements on lower slopes Farmlands and valley edges adjacent to urban centres
- improved grasslands used for cattle, sheep and horse grazing
- varied styles of enclosure including dry stone wall, hedgerow and fences
- varied mix of open land uses including farming, equestrian, outdoor sports (e.g., golf) and managed areas of countryside
- scattered tree and woodland cover, more significant than in upland areas
- evidence of medieval settlement
- historic industrial development evidenced by textile mills and mineral extraction sites active and relict
- greater influence of adjacent urban areas through ribbon and suburban development, landfill and cemetery sites etc, often fragmenting character

PfE policy JP-G1 'Landscape Character' states that development within a Landscape Character Type should reflect and respond to the special qualities and sensitivities of the key landscape characteristics of its location, including having regard to:

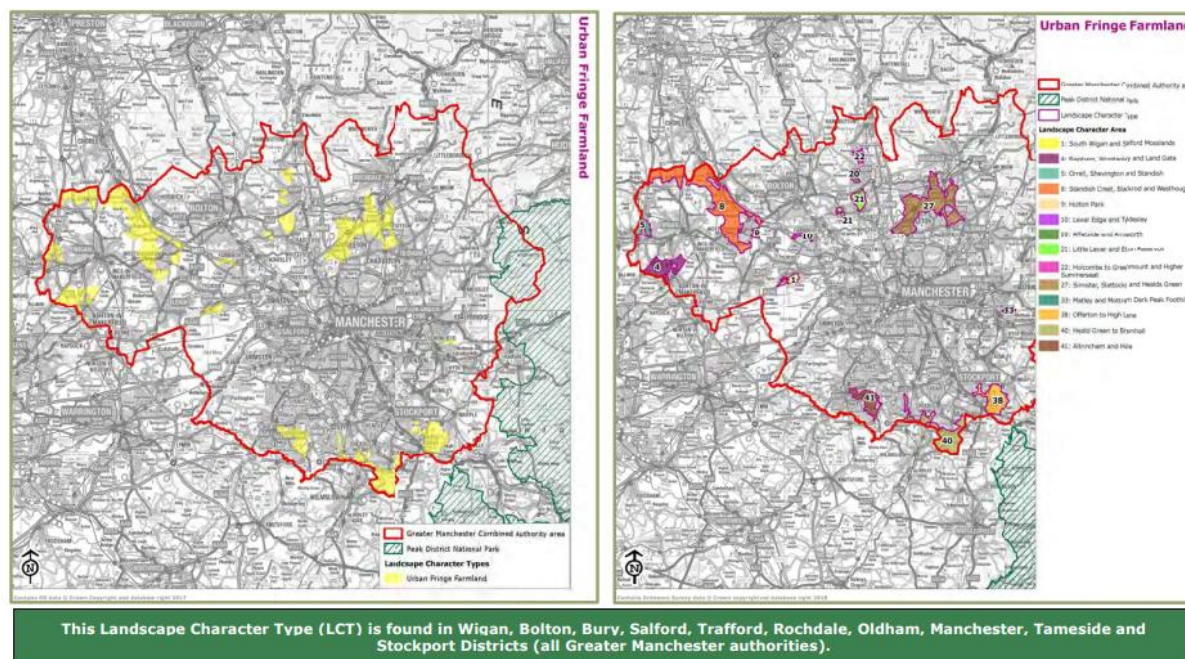
- Topography, geology and drainage;
- Land use and field patterns;
- Semi-natural habitats and woodland cover;
- Archaeology and cultural heritage;
- Settlement, road pattern and rights of way; and
- Views and perceptual qualities.

A Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (GMLCSA)<sup>1</sup> has been prepared and identifies 10 different landscape character types which make up Greater Manchester's predominantly unbuilt areas and sets out evidence of their characteristics and sensitivities. Within this study the application site falls within 'urban fringe farmland'.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1727/greater-manchester-landscape-character-and-sensitivity-report.pdf>

## LCT: Urban Fringe Farmland



The site is included within LCA 27 on the above diagram. The GMLCA states the following:

| LCA 27: Simister, Slattocks and Healds Green (Oldham)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |  |   |  |  |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|---|--|--|
| 2-3 storey residential housing developments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |  | M |  |  |
| Commercial/industrial developments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  |  | M |  |  |
| <b>Explanation for variance in sensitivity from overall LCT scores:</b> The urban farmland between Heywood and Middleton is judged to have a <b>moderate</b> sensitivity to commercial/ industrial development (in addition to the housing scenario) as it lies adjacent to and contains existing large industrial development (Birch Business Park and Stakehill Industrial & Distribution Park) and is crossed by large road infrastructure such as the M62 and A627(M) which have a strong influence, detracting from the rural qualities of the landscape. However, the more elevated land in the east of this LCA (around Thornfields Farm) would be more sensitive to development due to its visual prominence from areas to the west. |  |  |   |  |  |

The GMLCA sets out the special landscape qualities and key sensitivities of this character type. The following provides a summary of the special landscape qualities and key features/attributes that would be sensitive to change (e.g. as a result of development):

- Locations of elevated, open character with some prominent rural skylines forming a backdrop to views from adjacent urban areas.
- Areas of complex, undulating landform cut by distinctive steep wooded cloughs.
- Locally important 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 seminatural grasslands, ponds and flashes.

- Intact lengths of gritstone walls, hedgerows and tree clumps along field boundaries forming ecological networks and bringing definition to the 18th and 19th century and post-medieval field patterns.
- Unifying vernacular of stone-built traditional farms and cottages, with some listed buildings including the Grade II\* Brandlesholme Old Hall (Bury), Hopwood Hall (Rochdale) and Old Manor Farm (Stockport).
- Conservation Areas at Birch Village, Summerseat and the Macclesfield Canal, and the role the landscape plays as a rural setting to adjacent Conservation Areas.
- Industrial relicts, including disused railway lines, canals, mill buildings and the nationally designated Astley Green Colliery engine house and headgear.
- Two medieval moated sites near Marple and Standish which are nationally designated as Scheduled Monuments.
- Large areas defined by a sparse pattern of scattered stone-built farmsteads, individual properties and small settlements, linked by winding country lanes.
- Opportunities to access and enjoy the rural landscape, including the long distance footpaths (Rochdale Way, Rotary Way, Middlewich Way), cycle routes and a strong public rights of way network crossing the farmland and emanating from adjacent urban areas.

## **Landscape and Visual Appraisal**

A photographic landscape and visual appraisal of the site has been carried out to examine the visibility of the site from a range of public viewpoints in order to establish the potential for impacts on the landscape setting of the area. A site visit was undertaken on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2026. The assessment is included at the end of this section.

The appraisal, shows that from surrounding public viewpoints, the landscape setting and topography will serve to limit visual impact. On account of these characteristics it is not considered that the proposed development will be harmful or detrimental to the local and wider landscape setting. The successful integration of the development proposals with the site will protect the character of the Greenspace Corridor in accordance with local planning policies.

## Viewpoint Locations



## Viewpoints Photographic Survey

### Viewpoint 1: Bowlee Park, south west of the site



Views of the proposed development are unlikely to be visible from this position due to intervening distance and existing vegetation. Only limited glimpses of the upper storeys of the three storey Edgar Wood Academy are visible from this location, this existing built form will further impede and potential visibility of the proposed development.

Viewpoint 2: Bowlee Park, south west of the site



Views of the proposed development are unlikely to be visible from this position due to intervening distance, screening from vegetation and existing built form by virtue of the Edgar Wood Academy building.

## Viewpoint 3: PRoW to the north of the site



The gentle rise in topography before rescinding reduces views of the application site, which sits at a lower level. Visibility of the proposed single-story building will be further impeded by residential buildings to the west of the viewpoint and existing vegetation, which sits in a runs along the north and eastern boundaries of the site. Any potential glimpsed views of the roof structure or infrastructure associated with the external areas of the site would not be substantial, and would be read in the context of existing street lighting and the existing buildings on Creton Way and Langley Lane which frame this view.

## Viewpoint 4: PRoW to the north of the site



Views of the application site are obscured from this location as a result of the undulating topography. The flat roof of Edgar Wood Academy is barely distinguishable through the vegetation (even in March). Views of the proposed development are unlikely to be visible from this position as a result of topography and vegetation.

Viewpoint 5: Langley Lane outside Birch Stables, to the north of the site



This location on Langley Lane provides some opportunity for view of the site. However, some screening is provided by the existing vegetation and stables building. In addition the proposed development would be read against the backdrop of the existing Edgar Wood Academy building which has more exposure in this view. Visibility in summer will be further reduced when the deciduous trees between the application site and Langley Lane are in leaf.

Viewpoint 6: Footbridge over M62 to the west of site



There will be no views of the site from the footbridge over the M62. Views are prohibited by evergreen tree cover along the south of the motorway. If any views of the site were possible, these would likely be too distant for the proposed development to have an impact on landscape character.

## Viewpoint 7: PRoW to the west of the site



Views of the development are unlikely to be visible as a result of intervening distance. From this location, only a partial glimpse of the Edgar Wood Academy can be seen amongst the trees. Any potential views of the development are likely to be obscured by way of intervening distance, vegetation and topography. Any views would be recessive and therefore not have a notable impact on the landscape.

## Viewpoint 8: PRoW to the west of the site



A break the hedgerow provides an opportunity to view the general area from an elevated position. No views of the site will be visible from this westerly position on the public right of way due to distance and obstruction by existing vegetation. Visibility will be impeded further in summer months.

Viewpoint 9: Whittle Lane footpath to the northwest of the site



Levels on Whittle Lane gently decline when travelling in a southeastern direction towards the site. From this location the existing residential buildings, boundary walling and vegetation shield any potential views of the proposed one-storey development. This visual obstruction continues along Whittle Lane to its junction with Heywood Old Road.

Viewpoint 10: Heywood Old Road to the west of the site



The Edgar Wood Academy building can be seen in the right side of this view, with some recessive views of elevated houses on Creton Way and Wrigley Fold in the distance. On the left of the view, some residential development can be identified through the vegetation but this is largely obscured. Potential views of the proposed school are likely to be partially obscured by vegetation, and will also be read in the context of other development visible in this location.

## Viewpoint 11: Heywood Old Road to the west of the site



This viewpoint provides the most expansive and unhindered views towards the site, the view takes in Edgar Wood Academy, new residential development at Whittle Rise and Heywood Old Road including housing on the western side of the road. Views of the proposed development will be visible from this location, however this view is already reasonably urbanised and the open space in the foreground is managed recreational grassland. Views of the development from this location would not impact on any of the characteristics of the 'urban fringe farmland' as discussed earlier in this assessment.