

Land at Walshaw Road, Bury

11034_R02_Landscape & Visual Technical Note

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. This note has been prepared by Tyler Grange LLP on behalf of HIMOR in response to desktop analysis and a walkover appraisal undertaken in June 2017 at the above-named site.
- 1.2. The note provides a high-level overview and advice relating to landscape and visual matters in relation to the proposed future residential development of land to the north and south of Walshaw Road, Bury (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). It also provides a review of the existing Green Belt and associated suitability of the release of the land without harming the principal objectives of the Green Belt.
- 1.3. This report is to be read alongside the **Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan (11034/P04)** and **Photosheets for Photoviewpoints 1 to 8 (11034/P05)** that are contained at the rear of this report.
- 1.4. This report does not constitute a comprehensive assessment of landscape and visual issues, which would require additional fieldwork and assessment, but can be used to determine the developability of the land.

2.0 Site Context

- 2.1. The site is located at the north-western edge of Bury, centred around OS grid reference SD779116, and extends to approximately 88 hectares c.218 acres). The site is located adjacent to existing residential areas of Elton to the east and Walshaw to the south and west.
- 2.2. The site is dominated by fields bounded by hedgerows, with scattered trees. There are buildings on site, plus ponds, two brooks and field drains. There are also several parcels of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, and one Site of Biological Importance (SBI) falls within the southern part of the site. Walshaw Brook and the adjacent large waterbody, forms a vegetated corridor across the northern part of the site, and Walshaw Lane crosses the centre of the site east to west.
- 2.3. In the wider context, the site is surrounded by residential development to the east, north and south, and open countryside to the west.
- 2.4. A number of public rights of way cross the site as shown on the plan contained at the rear of this Technical Note.
- 2.5. In terms of the landscape planning policy context, the site is not subject to any national or local qualitative landscape designations.
- 2.6. Topographically the site is undulating in ground level, with the western edge of the site occupying the highest elevation at approximately 145m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum). The land broadly falls away to the east, and falls further towards Walshaw Brook to the north-east at approximately 123m AOD and towards Elton Brook and the associated reservoir at approximately 111m AOD.



3.0 Planning Context

- 3.1. The site is located within the administrative boundary of Bury Council.
- 3.2. Bury Council forms part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Combined Authority is currently going through the process of identifying sufficient land to meet the objectively assessed housing needs of all the Councils within the Combined Authority, via the production of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- 3.3. The GMSF proposes to release sufficient green belt in Bury to accommodate around 8,000 new homes and to provide much needed quality employment land that will attract significant investment and create job opportunities.
- 3.4. The site is currently identified within parcel 'OA 3 Walshaw (Bury)' within the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework which is considered to represent a significant opportunity to provide around 1,250 new homes.
- 3.5. The site is also currently subject to a Green Belt Designation (OL 1 - Green Belt) under the saved policies of the Bury Unitary Development Plan. However, the boundaries of the Green Belt within Greater Manchester, which this policy is part of, is under review as part of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- 3.6. A further review of Green Belt context is set out within this technical note and a summary of the adopted policies relevant to landscape consideration are set out below.

Adopted Bury Unitary Development Plan (Adopted August 1997)

- 3.7. The local policies within the UDP relating to landscape character and visual amenity that will need to be considered as part of any site promotion / emerging development proposal include:
 - H2 - Housing Environment and Design
 - EN1 - Built Environment
 - EN1/1 - Visual Amenity
 - EN1/2 - Townscape and Built Design
 - EN1/3 - Landscaping Provision
 - EN2 - Conservation and Listed Buildings
 - EN6 - Conservation of The Natural Environment
 - EN8 - Woodland and Trees
 - EN8/2 - Woodland and Tree Planting
 - EN9 – Landscape
 - EN10 - Environmental Improvement
 - OL1 - Green Belt
 - OL6 - Multi-Functional Countryside
- 3.8. These policies seek to ensure that the character, appearance and amenity of the environment is protected and enhanced, key views of prominent or important buildings (historically or architecturally) are retained, the visual amenity of the Green Belt is respected and that new areas of open space are integrated into new developments.
- 3.9. Policy also requires that a good standard of design is maintained within new housing development, to ensure the character and amenity of the surrounding area is respected and that new housing is well integrated into its context.
- 3.10. New trees and woodland will need to be retained and new tree and woodland planting will be encouraged by the Council.

4.0 Landscape Character & Visual Context

- 4.1. At a national level the site lies within the 'Manchester Pennine Fringe' Character Area (National Character Area 54); however, at a district level, and of greater relevance, the site and study area is described within the Bury Landscape Character Assessment (2009) where the site is considered to be located within the 'Fringe Industrial Brooks'. The key characteristics of this area are:
- *“These areas are dominated by a series of small brooks including Pigs Lee, Walshaw, Elton Brooks in the north and Hollins and Parr Brooks in the south.”*
 - *“Although the brooks have not been fully urbanised they have been heavily influenced by the Industrial Revolution with remnants of mills and works scattered along the course of each brook. “*
 - *“The brooks found within the urban fringe tend to contain more open spaces and fewer tree cover and archaeological sites than their counterparts in the South Pennine landscape.”*
 - *“The fringe brooks also fall within a lower altitude range of 170 to 90 metres above sea level and are almost entirely enclosed by urban areas along their middle and lower sections.”*
 - *“According to the 1848 maps these brooks were located within an agricultural setting but by 1953 / 1967 they had become almost surrounded by an urban environment.”*
 - *“One of the strongest characteristics found within the area are the series of small reservoirs along the course of each brook. These reservoirs relate themselves to the bleach works, print works and cotton mills which once dominated the landscape.”*
 - *“The woodland found within most of the Industrial Fringe Brook area generally comprise of bands of broadleaved trees. However, there are also a number of plantation woodland scattered within the areas of Elton, Parr and Hollins Brook. “*
 - *“Central areas are dominated by semi improved neutral grassland, higher altitudes dominated by improved grassland with lower areas dominated by amenity grass. “*
 - *“The lower areas are generally used for recreational use where the land is in close proximity to the main urban areas of Bury, Radcliffe and Whitefield. In contrast the open spaces in the upper parts of brook tend to have a stronger agricultural feel and are characterised by grazing cattle, post and rail fences and farm buildings.”*
- 4.2. Elements of the Fringe Industrial Brooks are present on site and within the immediate context, including the presence of small brooks, with reservoirs and broadleaved woodland associated with these brooks, and an agricultural (pastoral) context. There are also numerous field boundary hedgerows, which are gappy in places but well-maintained, as well as listed buildings and buildings of local historic importance. The settlement edge is evident and frequently appears directly overlooking the agricultural landscape. It is also necessary to recognise the gently undulating nature of the site and its immediate environs which results in the presence of localised areas of the site having a more intimate and enclosed character.
- 4.3. Of the 'Guiding Principles' noted within the Bury Landscape Character Assessment for the Fringe Industrial Brooks, the following are of relevance with regards to the site and the future development of it in order to preserve and enhance the character:



- Consolidate and strengthen wildlife links and corridors in all fringe industrial brook areas;
 - Continued landscape enhancement of broad leaved woodland at Elton Brook through woodland planting and management;
 - Continued landscape enhancement of plantation woodland at Elton Brook through woodland planting and management;
 - Promote the introduction of broad leaved woodland and plantation woodland along Walshaw Brook;
 - Promote recreation links between brook area and surrounding residential areas;
 - Prevent boundary loss and fragmentation around urban fringes;
 - Repair and maintain network of hedgerows at Walshaw Brook;
 - Promote the introduction of species rich hedgerows along Elton Brook;
 - Preserve buildings and other industrial heritage; and
 - Retain industrial heritage features relating to the bleach work buildings at Elton & Walshaw Brook where possible.
- 4.4. Despite the undulating topography, visibility of the site appears to predominantly relate to the adjacent built settlement edge, albeit there are localised opportunities for long distance views extending beyond the site to the wider landscape, and in particular to the rolling hills to the north. By contrast, the rolling topography of the site, together with the presence of woodland and hedgerow vegetation results in pockets that are well contained visually which gives it a more intimate character.
- 4.5. Overall, the number of people (visual receptors) affected by development of the site would be localised.

5.0 Suitability of the Site for Release from Green Belt

- 5.1. A review of the site's performance and suitability for release is summarised below in relation to the principal Green Belt objectives as set out within the NPPF (the Framework), with consideration of paragraph 81 of the Framework, in terms of positively enhancing Green Belt.
- 5.2. Whilst Green Belt is not a landscape designation, the review of the principle purposes have a close correlation with matters of inter-visibility and character.

To Check Unrestricted Sprawl

- 5.3. The principal consideration is the sprawl of the existing urban edges of Walshaw and Elton which are currently approximately 143m apart along Walshaw Road, but which are already connected to the north and south of the site, leaving the land within which the site is located currently completely detached from the wider Green Belt.
- 5.4. Whilst development of the site would result in some localised loss of the existing 'open' context between Walshaw and Elton, the width of the gap along Walshaw Road could be retained and



secured through the consideration of development offsets and the incorporation of areas of open recreational space within the site to retain a perception of some degree of separation.

- 5.5. There are currently no robust or defensible edges defining the urban edges of either Walshaw or Elton; indeed, intervisibility between the two edges is readily possible at present.

To Prevent Neighbouring Towns Merging into one another

- 5.6. In terms of the merging of settlements, the two settlement edges have already merged to the south of the site at Ainsworth Road and to the north at Scobell Street. As set out above, the two edges also already share intervisibility. As such, the extent to which the land on site could be considered to contribute towards the prevention of towns merging is limited. Through the consideration of a careful development response, new development could ensure the existing visual context from each of the settlement edges is consistent with the current context.
- 5.7. Further physical growth of Walshaw and Elton in this location, when considered in accordance with the promotion of a sensitive development in which new corridors of green infrastructure are created, would be no different from the existing landscape context given the existing visibility of the settlement edges adjacent.
- 5.8. The settlement fringe location also requires consideration in relation to the Framework, where sustainable development and associated benefits enables the proposals to be accommodated within a well-defined framework of established landscape features and recreational access. In this case, it means that the existing vegetation and field pattern can be used efficiently as part of any future development, maximising opportunities for strengthening the landscape and environmental quality of the site and maintaining the connecting green infrastructure to provide new recreational links across the site.

Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment

- 5.9. The existing condition, quality and context of the landscape on site restricts the extent to which it can be perceived to be open countryside. Instead, this is a landscape clearly located at the settlement edge, with urban fringe characteristics and frequent, clear, direct visibility of existing residential development. The Green Belt in relation to the site is surrounded by development on all sides, which restricts it from being perceived as open countryside beyond the settlement edge.
- 5.10. The existing framework of vegetation and surrounding residential edges restricts the perceived sense of openness and the character of the landscape is somewhat transitional with obvious urban fringe components. There is little sense that it represents typical open countryside. It is certainly not a remote or tranquil site.
- 5.11. The retention of the strong framework of vegetation, and the delivery of new green infrastructure would further limit the extent to which any proposed development would introduce uncharacteristic features into the landscape, indeed, such proposals would fulfil the aspirations and requirements of the local landscape character SPD.

Preserve the Setting and Special Character of Historic Towns

- 5.12. Available information does not determine any specific role that the site plays in providing an important setting to Bury. As always, aspects of this landscape are expected to be historic in origin, but no particularly rare or unique historic landscape features have been identified at this stage.



- 5.13. To the west of the site is a Grade II* Listed Building (Christ Church, Walshaw). There would be no direct effect on this heritage asset; however, the development of the agricultural land to the east of the Church would result in a change to the pastoral surroundings of the Church. This could be minimised through the incorporation of development offsets and the considered location of areas of recreational open space.
- 5.14. Based on these findings, effects upon this Green Belt objective would also be negligible.

Paragraph 81 of the Framework (NPPF)

- 5.15. As set out at paragraph 81 of the Framework, there are also opportunities to be explored in terms of positively enhancing the landscape context of the site. In association with a sensitive development response, the following objectives could be established and presented as part of the overall landscape strategy response:
- The improvement to public access for recreation and the provision of a hierarchy of informal open spaces, including new parkland; and
 - New native planting could improve on the condition and presence of existing landscape features, and could contribute towards local aspirations to increase tree cover. The detailed design, specification and maintenance of areas of woodland habitat could bring about the required species diversity.

6.0 Constraints & Opportunities (Landscape Themes)

- 6.1. In response to both desktop assessment and fieldwork, a series of landscape recommendations have been established to guide the sensitive development of the site. These observations are set out on the plan contained at the rear of this report and represent a 'landscape-led approach' could be achieved.
- 6.2. The key themes include:
- Existing views towards the spire of the Grade II* Listed Christ Church from Walshaw Road should be retained to maintain legibility and the sense of place with local landmarks.
 - Any new development along Walshaw Road should consider the frontage onto the road itself to relate appropriately to the existing residential properties opposite.
 - Consideration of the interaction of future development parcels with the retained areas of open space and new green infrastructure corridors in order to ensure a characteristic settlement edge is provided.
 - New recreational routes could be incorporated into the development along new key green infrastructure corridors to link up to existing public rights of way.
 - Existing long distance views towards the rolling hills to the north of the site could be retained through the incorporation of a corridor of green infrastructure and/or the restriction of building heights.
 - A corridor of green infrastructure could be incorporated into the eastern development edge to ensure a permanent green buffer at the settlement edge and to provide opportunities for



new north-south recreational links across the site linking to existing public rights of way in line with local SPD recommendations.

- Existing field boundary vegetation could be retained and enhanced as per local SPD recommendations and utilised to define new development parcels.
- Existing public rights of way could be enhanced through the incorporation of new green infrastructure corridors across the site, ensuring adjacent new development is softened and the amenity of recreational footpath users is considered, as well as enhancing the local rights of way network.
- Existing well-established roadside vegetation (including hedgerows and trees) should be retained and strengthened in order to retain the visual screening it provides and as a localised character feature.
- A development offset from Dow Lane should be considered in order to retain the leafy, semi-rural character of the lane for vehicular and pedestrian users.
- The eastern parcels of the site, if developed, should be at a lower density to provide a transition from the retained open grassland adjacent and the new settlement edge, and also to respect the localised smaller-scale character evident within that part of the site.
- Development on the northern part of the site will need to respond to the topographically undulating ground levels to ensure development does not become overly dominant within the surrounding context and doesn't break the established built skyline in long distance views from further south.

7.0 Conclusion

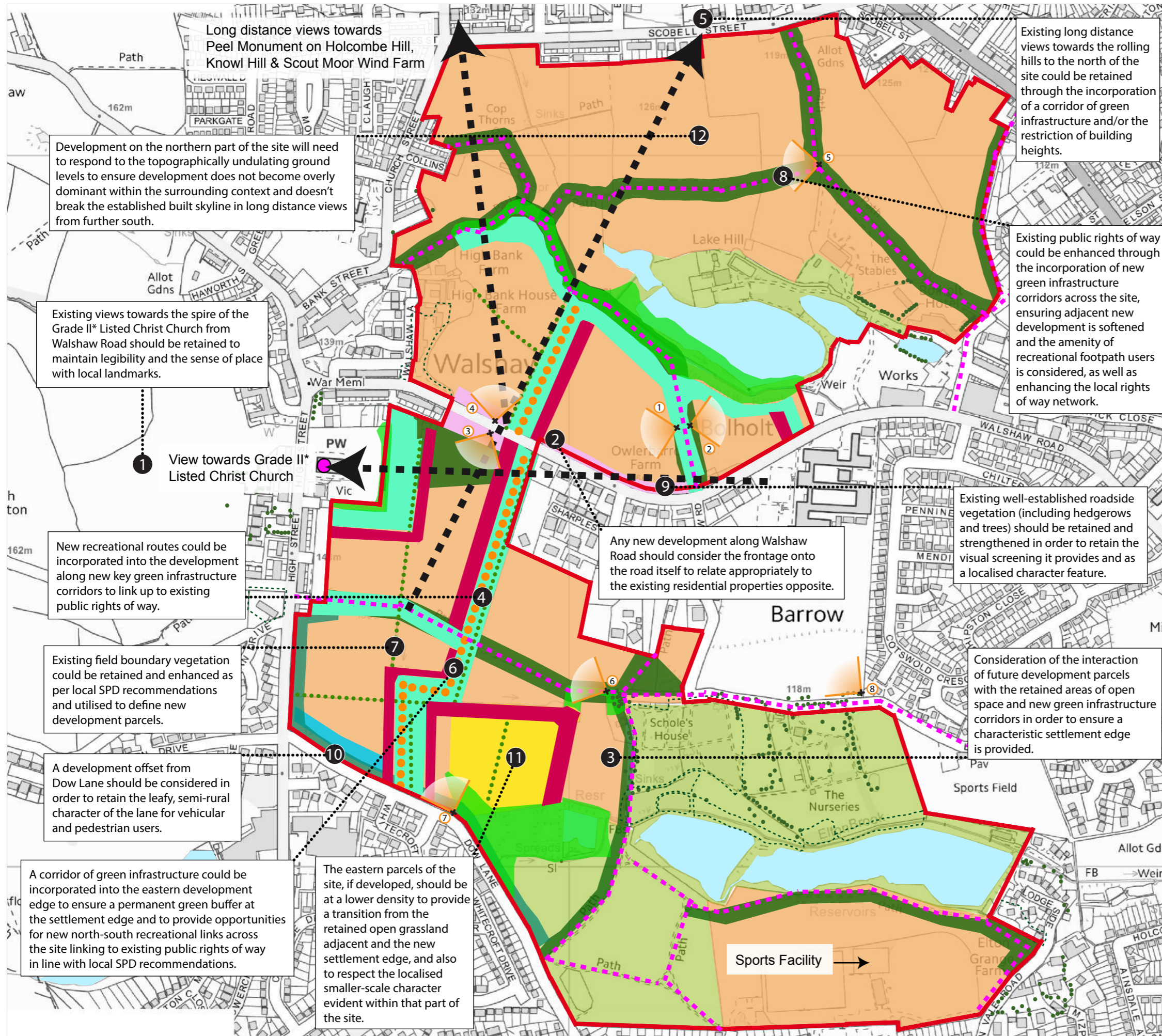
- 7.1. In response to the desktop undertaken it is evident that the site represents a logical release from the Green Belt in landscape terms, particularly given that it is currently completely physically detached from the wider Green Belt by existing residential development.
- 7.2. The character of the landscape is neither rare nor unique and as classified within the landscape character SPD, it is clearly typical of its type, has no real sense of tranquillity, and is surrounded by urban context.
- 7.3. Whilst development in this location would essentially remove land from the Green Belt in this location, it has been set out that the site does not currently contribute towards the objectives of the Green Belt as set out in the Framework.
- 7.4. Opportunities also exist to maintain and improve public access across the landscape on site, to link up existing public rights of way, to introduce planting that would strengthen and enhance the existing landscape features and reflect the characteristics of the local landscape; and, to enable the connectivity of existing woodland habitats.
- 7.5. This site is suitable for release from the Green Belt and could be considered for residential development without resulting in detrimental harm to the landscape character or visual amenity of the area.



Plans

Landscape Opportunities and Constraints
11034_P04

Photoviewpoints
11034_P05



Development on the northern part of the site will need to respond to the topographically undulating ground levels to ensure development does not become overly dominant within the surrounding context and doesn't break the established built skyline in long distance views from further south.

Existing views towards the spire of the Grade II* Listed Christ Church from Walshaw Road should be retained to maintain legibility and the sense of place with local landmarks.

New recreational routes could be incorporated into the development along new key green infrastructure corridors to link up to existing public rights of way.

Existing field boundary vegetation could be retained and enhanced as per local SPD recommendations and utilised to define new development parcels.

A development offset from Dow Lane should be considered in order to retain the leafy, semi-rural character of the lane for vehicular and pedestrian users.

A corridor of green infrastructure could be incorporated into the eastern development edge to ensure a permanent green buffer at the settlement edge and to provide opportunities for new north-south recreational links across the site linking to existing public rights of way in line with local SPD recommendations.

The eastern parcels of the site, if developed, should be at a lower density to provide a transition from the retained open grassland adjacent and the new settlement edge, and also to respect the localised smaller-scale character evident within that part of the site.

Any new development along Walshaw Road should consider the frontage onto the road itself to relate appropriately to the existing residential properties opposite.

Existing long distance views towards the rolling hills to the north of the site could be retained through the incorporation of a corridor of green infrastructure and/or the restriction of building heights.

Existing public rights of way could be enhanced through the incorporation of new green infrastructure corridors across the site, ensuring adjacent new development is softened and the amenity of recreational footpath users is considered, as well as enhancing the local rights of way network.

Existing well-established roadside vegetation (including hedgerows and trees) should be retained and strengthened in order to retain the visual screening it provides and as a localised character feature.

Consideration of the interaction of future development parcels with the retained areas of open space and new green infrastructure corridors in order to ensure a characteristic settlement edge is provided.

- Site Boundary
- Potential development parcels Suitable in landscape and visual terms
- Consideration of lower density development at edges of developable area
- Avoid Development - Key Landscape/ Green Infrastructure Assets - Too Sensitive
- Frontage considerations to be taken into account to ensure development relates to Walshaw Road and existing residential development
- Development edges to take into account relationship with adjacent Green Infrastructure Corridors and retained open space
- Retention of development offset in order to maintain character of Dow Lane
- Existing woodland vegetation - retain and strengthen with additional planting and woodland management
- Existing roadside vegetation - retain and strengthen with additional planting
- Recommended areas of open space and key Green Infrastructure corridors
- Development Offsets & Landscape Buffers Required
- TPO - Areas
- TPO - Individual Trees
- Existing field boundary hedgerows - retain and enhance with supplementary hedgerow planting
- Potential recreational routes through the site across key infrastructure corridors
- Grade II* Listed Building
- Public Footpaths/Byways & Permissive Paths
- Visual Corridors - Views to Landmarks
- Annotation Reference
- Photoviewpoint Locations



Project Land at Walshaw, Bury
 Drawing Title **Landscape Opportunities and Constraints**
 Scale As Shown (Approximate)
 Drawing No. 11034/P04
 Date July 2017
 Checked HCT/AL



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Photoviewpoint 1:	Taken from public footpath 128BUR	Distance from Site:	On Site	Orientation	West	Coordinates:	53.600590, -2.331410
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Photoviewpoint 2:	Taken from public footpath 128BUR looking towards Elton	Distance from Site:	On Site	Orientation	East	Coordinates:	53.600590, -2.331410
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Approximate Extent of Site



Photoviewpoint 3:	Taken from Walshaw Road looking towards Grade II* Listed Christ Church	Distance from Site:	2m	Orientation	South-West	Coordinates:	53.600711, -2.335802
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Approximate Extent of Site



Photoviewpoint 4:	Taken from Walshaw Road looking north towards Holcombe Hill and Scout Moor Wind Farm	Distance from Site:	15m	Orientation	North	Coordinates:	53.600711, -2.335802
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Photoviewpoint 5:	Taken from public footpath 93TOT	Distance from Site:	On Site	Orientation	West	Coordinates:	53.603956, -2.328917
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Photoviewpoint 6:	Taken from public footpath 143BUR looking west towards Grade II* Listed Christ Church	Distance from Site:	150m	Orientation	West	Coordinates:	53.597359, -2.333990
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Photoviewpoint 7:	Taken from Dow Lane	Distance from Site:	2m	Orientation	North-west	Coordinates:	53.595833, -2.336787
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Photoviewpoint 8:	Taken from Elton High School playing fields looking west towards the site	Distance from Site:	500m	Orientation	West	Coordinates:	53.597317, -2.327796
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