

Preliminary Landscape & Visual Overview Land at Walshaw Road, Bury 4 March 2020

12398 \_R01c \_GW\_AL



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# Contents

## Plans

Section 1: Introduction and Site Context	1	12398/P07	Plan 1: Concept Masterplan
Section 2: Policy Context	3	12398/P01a	Plan 2: Site Location and Site Context
Section 3: Landscape Character	4	12398/P0a2	Plan 3: Policy
Section 4: Visual Study	6	12398/P03a	Plan 4: Landscape Character
Section 5: Green Belt	12	12398/P04a	Plan 5: Topography
Section 6: Recommendations and Conclusion	13	12398/P05a	Plan 6: Viewpoint Locations
		12398/P06b	Plan 7: Landscape Opportunities and Constrai

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raints



#### Introduction and Site Context 1

#### Background

- 1.1 This note has been prepared by Tyler Grange Group Limited on behalf of Redrow Homes Limited in response to desktop analysis and a walkover appraisal undertaken in May 2019 at Land North of Walshaw Road (hereafter referred to as 'the site').
- 1.2 The site forms part of a wider masterplan covering the draft Policy GM Allocation 9 Walshaw. The combined Concept Masterplan taken from Barton Willmore's Walshaw Garden Neighbouhood, Bury - Development Framework 2019 Rev.N Document is provided in Plan 1. The redline boundary of the site is overlain for reference.
- The overview provides advice relating to landscape character 1.3 and visual amenity at a high level to appraise the feasibility of the future residential development of the site.
- 1.4 This overview report does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) / full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). It is intended that this work will inform potential development going forward and provide a review of the suitability of the land for release from the Green Belt.

#### Site Context

- 1.5 The site is located at the north-western edge of Bury, centred around OS grid reference SD 78295 11925, and extends to approximately 18 hectares). The site is located adjacent to existing residential areas of Elton to the east and Walshaw to the south and west. Walshaw Brook passes along the southern boundary.
- 1.6 A number of public rights of way that pass along the boundary of the site are 128BUR, 129BUR, 93TOT and 94TOT. Public rights of way that enter/cross the site are 125BUR, 126BUR and 127BUR. The site is therefore well connected to the local public rights of way network.
- 1.7 To the general west lies the village of Walshaw, the general north lies the Tottington neighbourhood of Bury. The site is currently separated from these urban areas by fields which are to be developed as part of the wider masterplan. To the general north-west and west lies the Elton neighbourhood of Bury. To the general south the landscape is more mixed comprising urban extensions to Elton and undeveloped field parcels which are to be developed as part of the wider masterplan.
- In terms of the landscape planning policy context, the site 1.8 is not subject to any national or local qualitative landscape designations.

#### Plan 1: Indicative Concept Masterplan





(Dedrew)
DEVELOPMENT
EMERGENCY ACCESS
VEHICLE ACCESS
CE
LINK ROAD
PROPOSED ITING
EN SPACE

Extracted from Google Earth Pro © 2019

# 1 Introduction and Site Context

1.9 Topographically the site is on sloped and gently undulating ground level with the northern part occupying the highest elevation at approximately 125m altitude. The land broadly falls away to the general south towards Walshaw Brook at 121m altitude.



# Plan 2: Site Location and Site Context (12398/P01a)



#### **Policy Context** 2

#### Designations

- 1.10 The site lies partly within a Special Landscape Areas which encompasses the standing water and woodland habitats in the southern part of the site.
- 1.11 There are no Conservation Areas within the site or within visual range of the site. The closest Conservation Area is 'Bury Town Centre' located ~1.75km south-east of the site.

#### Adopted Bury Unitary Development Plan (Adopted August 1997)

- 1.12 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
  - EN8/3 Red Rose Forest
  - EN9 Landscape
  - EN10 Environmental Improvement
  - OL1 Green Belt
  - OL6 Multi-Functional Countryside
  - RT3/3 Access to the Countryside
- 1.13 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.

- 1.14 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.
- 1.15 New trees and woodland will need to be retained and new tree and woodland planting will be encouraged by the Council.

## Plan 3: Policy (12398/P02a)

#### Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF)

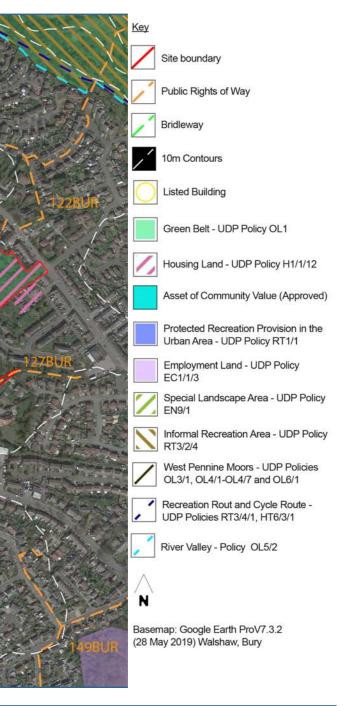
wider development.







1.16 The GMSF is proposing six areas across the borough for employment and housing development. The site forms part of 'Walshaw GMA9' for which high-level master planning has been undertaken to show how the site might be developed as part of a



#### Landscape Character 3

#### National and Local Character

- 1.17 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."
  - "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."

#### Plan 4: Landscape Character (12398/P03a)



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#### Key



Site boundary



NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe

Local Landscape Character Types



Fringe Indiustrial Brook



Pennine Industrial Brook



Urban area



Basemap: Google Earth ProV7.3.2 (28 May 2019) Walshaw, Bury



#### 3 Landscape Character

- 1.19 Elements of the Fringe Industrial Brooks are present on site and within the immediate context in the form of Walshaw Brook which is associated with onsite broadleaved woodland and has 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 westernmost part of the site to the west of Bolholt Country Park Hotel having a more intimate and enclosed character.
- 1.20 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 and should be incorporated where possible:
  - Consolidate and strengthen wildlife links and corridors in all fringe industrial brook areas;
  - Promote the introduction of broadleaved 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:
  - Preserve buildings and other industrial heritage; and
  - Retain industrial heritage features relating to the bleach work buildings at Elton & Walshaw Brook where possible.

#### **Regional Character**

- 1.21 At the regional level, the site is covered by Greater Manchester's Landscape Character and Sensitivity Assessment (LUC, 2018). Within this document, the site is located within the Landscape Character Type (LCT): Urban Fringe Farmland and Landscape Character Area '20: Affetside and Ainsworth'.
- 1.22 The chracter attributes of LCT: Urban Fringe Farmland with relevance to the site are summarised as being:
  - Topography: 'Rolling landscape'

- Drainage: 'Drained by network of streams and ponds';
- Land use: 'Pastoral land enclosed by small and medium sized parcels';
- Field Patterns: 'Field boundaries often gappy, species poor hedgerows with established clumps of hedgerow trees. Post and wire fencing replaces hedging in many places';
- Semi-natural habitats: 'Established clumps of hawthorn .... line some of the field boundaries incorporating mature broadleaved trees';
- Settlement: 'generally a dispersed pattern of scattered farmsteads and individual dwellings constructed on local gritstones and occasional small settlements including 20th century ribbon development along roads';
- Road pattern: 'A network of major roads and rail routes'
- Rights of way: '...permeate the landscape';
- Views: 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' ... 'wide panoramic views' ... Views within the floodplains are typically restricted by hedgerows, hedgerow trees and development creating an enclosed landscape';
- Perceptual gualities: 'Transport corridors and pylon lines very apparent.

### Site Specific Character

- 1.23 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. These long distance views extend to the north and provide sight lines of Peel Monument located ~4.25km from sections of the public rights of way network within and adjacent to the site. In addition long distance views can be achieved to general west towards the Pennines. Views are also achievable to the general south-west of Christ Church (grade II\* Listed Building). 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 with views contained to the site and adjacent land.
- 1.24 The site has a settlement edge setting with built form often visible in the periphery of views across the site. Overall, the number of people (visual receptors) affected by development of



the site would be localised.

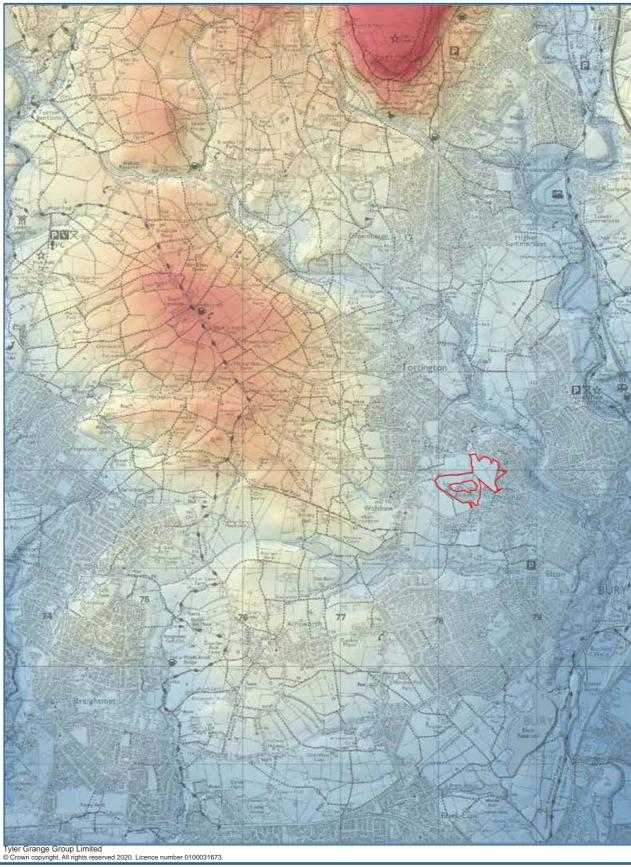
#### **Visual Context and Visual Receptors**

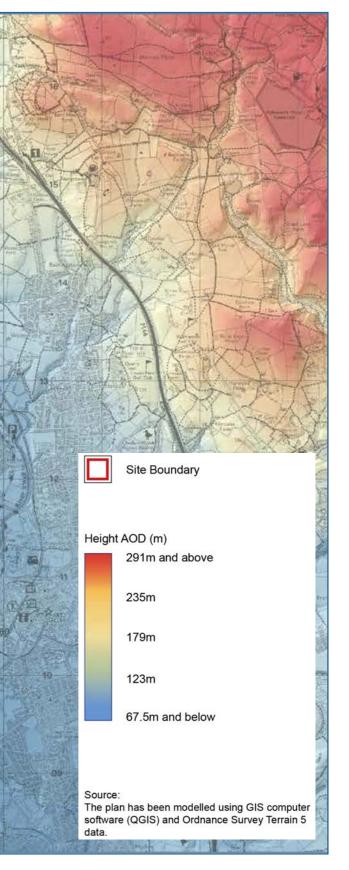
- 1.25 Topographical mapping (**Plan 5: Topography**) was undertaken to facilitate the identification of important views to/from the site. This exercise identified Peel Monument, a Grade II Listed Building located in an elevated position ~4.25km north of the site. Visibility of the monument was confirmed through field work.
- 1.26 Given that this assessment comprises a high-level exercise, the selected viewpoint locations are all located within the site or in the immediate locality of the site. However, where notable views from private properties are possible, these have been considered where relevant.

#### Public Rights of Way

1.27 A network of public rights of way is present within/around the site and within the wider area. From some of these paths the site is visible albeit filtered by vegetation and obscured in part as a result of the undulating topography and built form. The routes through and connecting to the site are shown on Plan 2: Policy Map.

# Plan 5: Topography (12398/P04a)







### **Extent and Composition of Views**

- 2.1 Elements of the Fringe Industrial Brooks are present on site and within the immediate context in the form of Walshaw Brook which is associated with onsite broadleaved woodland and has an agricultural (pastoral) context within and in proximity to the site. Some of the internal and boundary hedgerows have been replaced with wood post and wire fencing. The remaining field boundary hedgerows are gappy in places but well-maintained.
- 2.2 Despite the underlating topography, visibility of the site appears to predominantly relate to the adjacent built settlement edge and is evident from the Public Rights of Way paths that pass within and around the site. The urban edge also frequently appears directly overlooking the agricultural landscape.
- 2.3 There are localised opportunities for long distance views extending beyond the site to the general north and west. Listed buildings can also be seen from the site namely Christ Church (grade II\* Listed Building) to the general south-west and Peel Monument (grade II Listed Building) to the general north.
- 2.4 It is also necessary to recognise the gently undulating nature of the site and its immediate environs combined with the height of the hedgerows results in the westernmost field parcel to the immediate east of Viewpoint Location 4 having a more enclosed character. In addition the dense understorey of the woodland parcels provide these habitats with a more enclosed character.
- 2.5 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 it's character and should be incorporated where possible:
  - Consolidate and strengthen wildlife links and corridors in all fringe industrial brook areas;
  - Promote the introduction of broadleaved 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; and

- Preserve buildings and other industrial heritage.
- 2.6 The site has a settlement edge setting with built form often visible in the periphery of views across the site. Overall, the number

### Plan 6: Viewpoint Locations (12398/P05a)





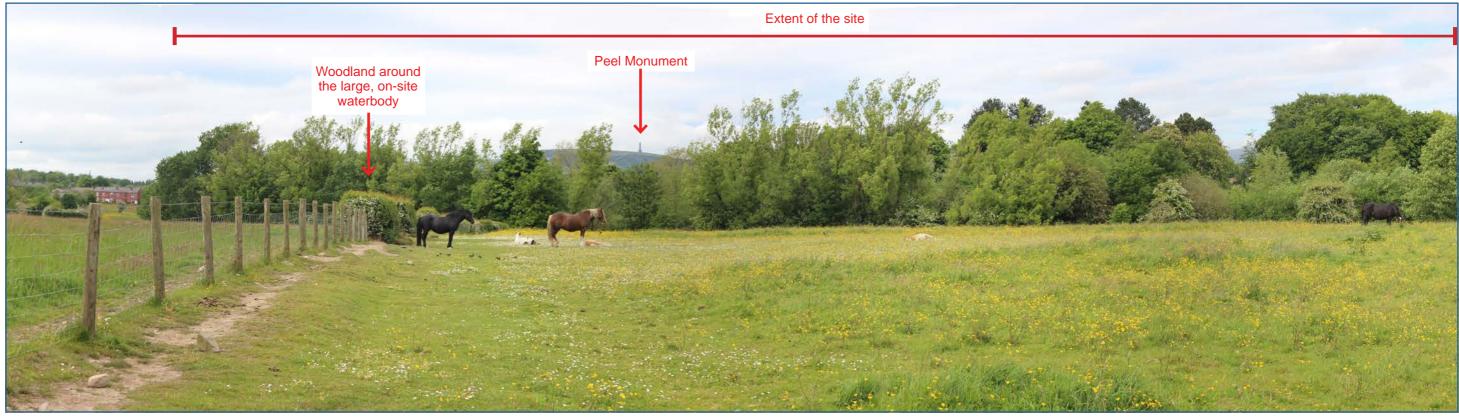


of people (visual receptors) affected by development of the site would be localised.



Taken from the access road to Bolholt Country Park Hotel within the site boundary and adjacent to the access gate to Bolholt Bungalow. Photoviewpoint 1:

Orientation:



Taken from PRoW 128BUR passing through a horse-grazed pasture towards the wooded, southern boundary of the site. Photoviewpoint 2:

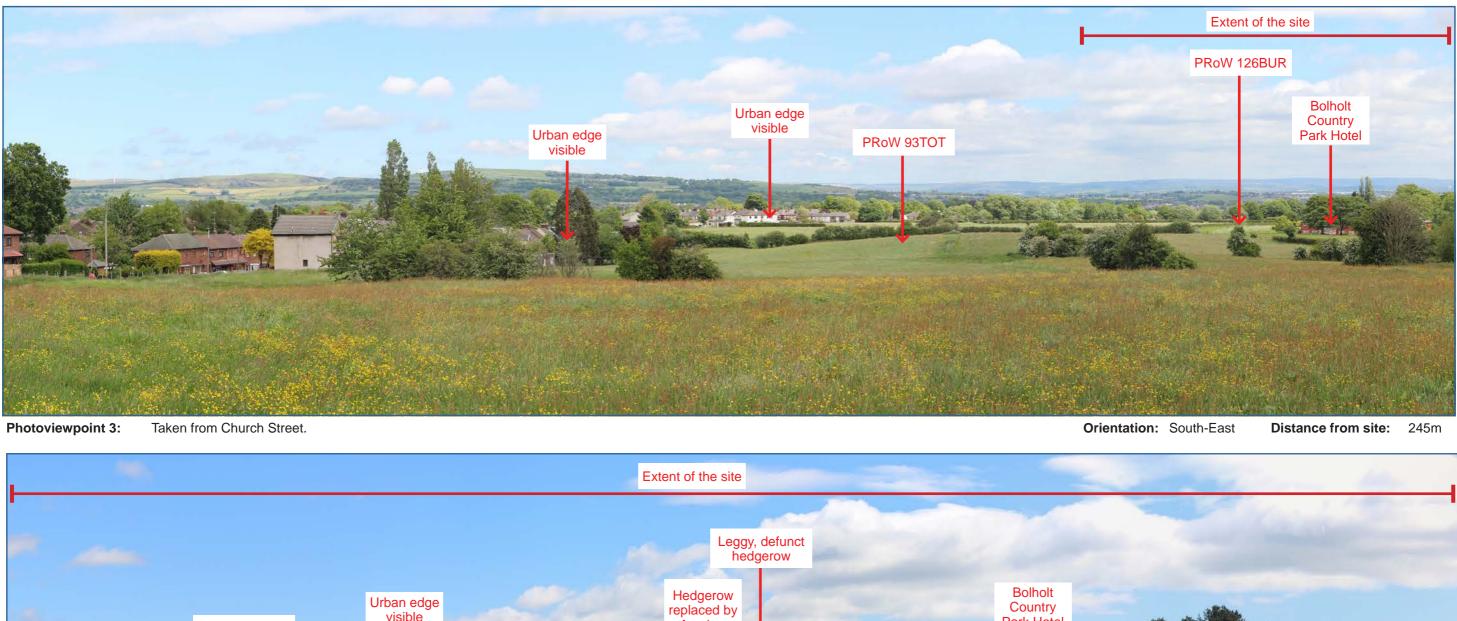
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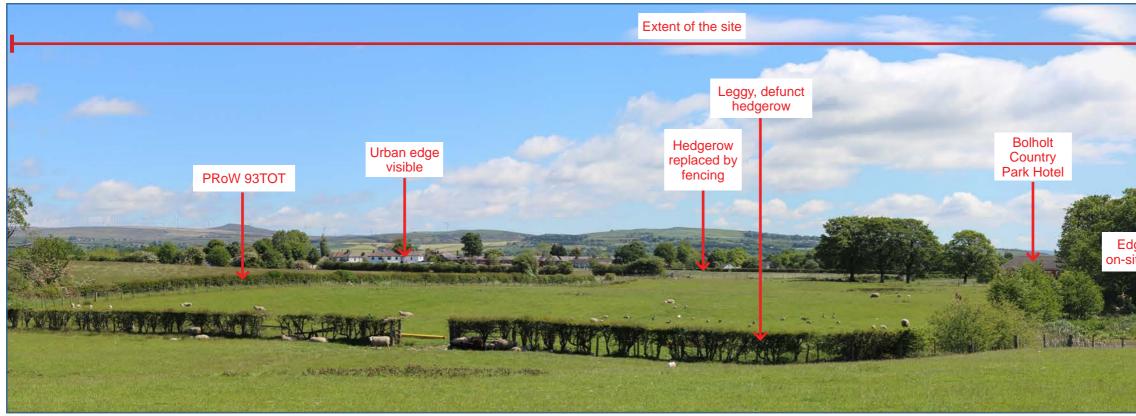
West Distance from site: On site

**Orientation:** North-West

Distance from site: 135m







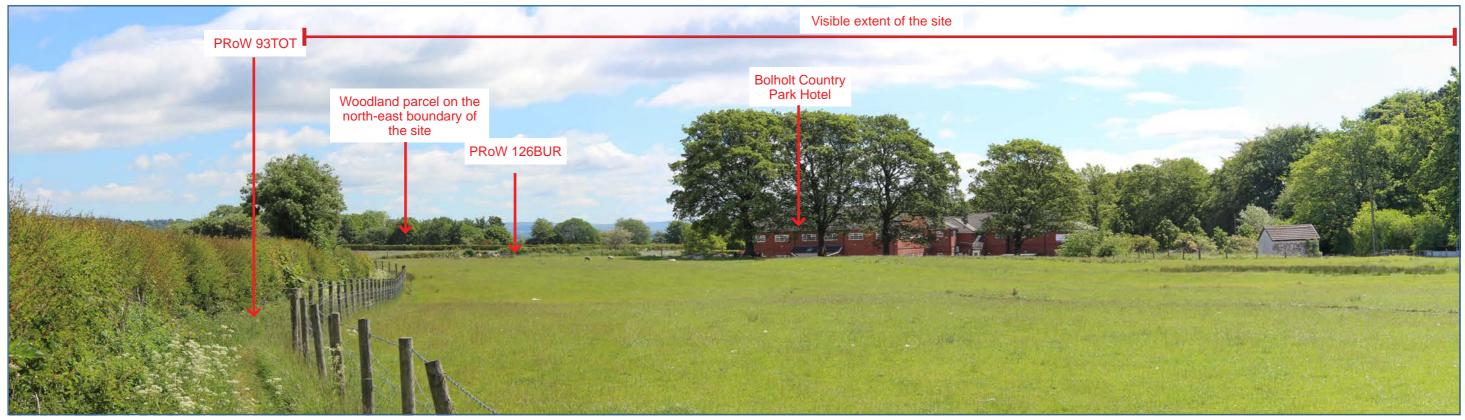
Photoviewpoint 4: Taken from PRoW 128BUR immediately adjacent to the site boundary.



Edge of large on-site waterbody

Orientation: North-East

Distance from site: 1m



**Photoviewpoint 5:** Taken from PRoW 93TOT which passes along the northern boundary of the site near OS Grid Reference SD 78127 11952.

Orientation:



**Photoviewpoint 6:** Taken from Watkins Place close to the junction between Watkins Place and Scobell Street.

Orientation:

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on:EastDistance from site:Om

ion: South

Distance from site:

50m







Taken from PRoW 126BUR near OS Grid Reference SD 78353 11980 close to the PRoW's junction with PRoW 94TOT. Photoviewpoint 8:

**Orientation:** North-East **Distance from site:** On site



- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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**

- 2.9 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 of the site. This has left the land within which the site is located and the neighbouring fields to be developed as part of the Concept Masterplan (see Plan 1) more or less detached from the wider Green Belt.
- 2.10 Whilst the proposed Concept Masterplan (see Plan 1) development would result in some localised loss of the existing 'open' context between Walshaw and Elton, in the locality of the site, the incorporation of areas of open recreational space within the site and the inclusion of sensitively located lower-density and restricted development heights could retain a perception of some degree of separation.
- 2.11 There are currently no robust or defensible edges defining the urban edges of either Walshaw or Elton; indeed, inter-visibility between the two edges is readily possible at present.

### To Prevent Neighbouring Towns Merging into one another

- 2.12 In terms of the merging of settlements, the two settlement edges have already merged to the north of the site at Scobell Street. As set out above, the two edges also already share inter-visibility. 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, proposed Concept Masterplan (see Plan 1) development could ensure the existing visual context from each of the settlement edges is at least consistent with the current context or enhanced i.e. by creating enhanced vegetated screening which appears to naturally connect with existing habitats such as the woodland around the on-site ponds.
- 2.13 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 and adjacent developments.

#### Safeguarding the Countryside from Encroachment

- 2.14 The mostly unscreened presence of Bolholt Country Park Hotel, the gappy status of the boundary hedgerows and the deteriorated condition of many of the site boundaries via their replacement with wooden post and wire fencing in places restricts the extent to which the site can be perceived to be open countryside. Indeed, development including the settlement edges of Elton and Walshaw can be observed in all directions from the site. 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 and neighbouring fields is surrounded by development on all sides, which restricts it from being perceived as open countryside beyond the settlement edge.
- 2.15 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 not a remote or tranquil site.
- 2.16 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

- 2.17 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.
- 2.18 To the south-west of the site is a Grade II\* Listed Building (Christ Church, Walshaw). There would be no direct effect on this heritage asset and given the presence of development between this heritage asset and the site, it is considered that the site does not form part of the pastoral surroundings of the Church.

would also be negligible.

# Paragraph 81 of the Framework (NPPF)

- strategy response:

  - species diversity.

With regard to the Peel Monument Grade II Listed Building, it is considered that the distance between the site and this heritage asset renders the site not part of its setting which is likely transitional upland based on its perceived upland locality from

2.19 Based on these findings, effects upon this Green Belt objective

2.20 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

> • The improvement to public access for recreation and the provision of a hierarchy of informal open spaces; 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



#### 6 **Recommendations and Conclusion**

#### Landscape Recommendations

- 3.1 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 how a 'landscape-led approach' could be achieved.
- 3.2 The key themes include:
  - The section of the Special Landscape Area that covers part of the site should not be developed where possible. Bury UDP Policy EN9/1 states with regard to land in Special Landscape Areas that: "High standards of design, siting and landscaping will be expected. Unduly obtrusive development will not be permitted in such areas". Retaining the sections of the Special Landscape Area that contain notable wildlife habitats such as standing water and woodland in addition to those elsewhere on site will serve to enhance the retained habitats in accordance with the key characteristics of 'Fringe Industrial Brooks' landscape character.
  - Existing views towards the spire of the Grade II\* Listed Christ Church from Walshaw Road and Grade II Listed Peel Monument should be retained to maintain the sense of place with local landmarks and protect visual amenity along the existing PRoW network. This can be achieved by the strategic locating of new GI corridors, by considering street orientations and restricted built form heights.
  - Development parcels should have form and layout that integrates with retained semi-natural habitats and water features and reflect the density and character evident in the site's locality as indicated on Plan 7: Landscape Opportunities and Constraints. This can be achieved in part by the strategic use of Green Infrastructure corridors and the retention and strengthening of the site boundaries in places and by using retained, existing hedgerows to define development parcels where present. The siting of a designated Public Open Space around the retained waterbody in the southwest section of the site will also facilitate this as shown on the Concept Masterplan (Plan 1) and will create a relationship between POS and the Special Landscape Area.
  - The retention and strengthening of the boundary hedgerows will help screen the development parcels and will maintain the more enclosed character to the retained Special Landscape Area, proposed Public Open Spaces and potential play areas as shown on the Concept Masterplan

(Plan 1). Likewise the retention and enhancement of the Public Rights of Way network with GI corridors will retain the semi-rural character of these routes for pedestrians and provide opportunities for connections to be created with adjacent developments. The size of the POS required should be determined in accordance with published guidance once the density of future development is known and could incorporate potential play areas.

- The hedgerows are dominated by hawthorn but contain other woody species such as elder which is a shorterlived species and can result in hedgerow gaps developing. Enhance hedgerows where possible.
- · Existing trees should be retained and protected where possible. This should cover all trees: scattered trees, hedgerow trees and trees forming woodland. New tree planting should also be undertaken within the new urban area to include street trees. By creating a net gain in trees, the development would also shown regard for the Community Forest Trust's City of Trees movement as per Bury UDP Policy EN8/3.
- The incorporation of street trees within the streetscape should be considered to connect with both new and retained GI thereby creating a connected GI strategy.
- 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.

#### Conclusion

- 3.3 In response to the desktop undertaken it is evident that the site represents a logical release from the Green Belt in landscape terms.
- 3.4 Given the screening benefit and character contributions made by the woodland and standing water habitats within the Special Landscape Area, these habitats should be retained and enhanced as part of the GI Strategy for the site. It is considered that the strip of grassland between the woodland and Walshaw Road contributes little to the character or visual amenity of the Special Landscape Area given it's small size and that it is not readily overlooked from the Public Rights of Way. Indeed, the entrance gate to this strip from Walshaw Road is overgrown with

urban edge.

- woodland habitats.
- the area.



bramble further reducing inter-visibility between this strip and the

3.5 Opportunities exist to maintain and improve public access across the landscape on site, to link up existing public rights of way network within the wider area of the Concept Masterplan (Plan 1), 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

3.6 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.

3.7 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

#### **Recommendations and Conclusion** 6

Plan 7: Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan (12398/P06b)



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Land at Walshaw Road, Bury Preliminary Landscape & Visual Overview 12398\_R01c\_GW\_AL\_4 March 2020

Site boundary

Potential Development Parcel to include internal landscapinging and street tree planting

Retained and enhanced habitat to include new Public Open Space and Children's Play Areas

Public Open Space

Potential New Public Right of Way

Existing Public Right of Way to be retained/diverted

New or retained and enhanced

Basemap: Google Earth ProV7.3.2 (28 May 2019) Walshaw, Bury

