

Residential dwellings at former nursing home, Ainsworth

Landscape and Visual Appraisal

July 2021

Prepared for:

Nationwide Building & Civils Ltd





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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Randall Thorp LLP has been commissioned by Nationwide Building & Civils Ltd to produce a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) to accompany a full planning application for 2 dwellings within a site which occupies part of the grounds of the former nursing home at Ainsworth.
- 1.2. The site lies to the north of Ainsworth, is accessed off Knowsley Road. The site location is shown below. **Figure 1 (Appendix A)** shows the extent of the LVA study area.
- 1.3. The site and wider former nursing home are well enclosed by existing trees which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO).
- 1.4. The adopted policy is the Bury UDP which includes the site within areas designated as Green Belt, Special Landscape Area and the West Pennine Moors.



- 1.5. The LVA identifies and assesses the anticipated effects resulting from the development on the character and features of the landscape and on people's views and visual amenity. It describes the assessment methodology; the baseline conditions of the application site and its surroundings; the scheme and the potential effects arising from it; the mitigation measures adopted to prevent, reduce or offset any significant adverse effects; and the likely residual effects when the scheme is operational.

2. Methodology

Guidance

- 2.1. The LVA has been prepared in accordance with 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' (GLVIA3), Third Edition, 2013; Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.
- 2.2. Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 06/19 (2019) – Visual Representation of Development Proposals has been followed in respect of Type 1, Annotated Viewpoint Photographs.
- 2.3. Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 – Assessing landscape value outside national designations has been followed in respect of the assessment of valuing the landscape.

Approach

- 2.4. The following approach to the assessment was undertaken.

Establishing the landscape and visual baseline

- establish the landscape and visual context of the site, including where appropriate, reference to the built context
- establish the landscape components within the site along with any specific aesthetic or perceptual qualities of the site or views around the site which contribute to landscape character or visual amenity
- identify the landscape receptors (aspects of the landscape including character and physical features) and visual receptors (individuals and/or defined groups of people) which have the potential to be affected by the proposed change
- define the study area
- consider the value attached to the landscape

Describing the development and measures incorporated to mitigate potential effects

- describe aspects of the development which have potential to cause landscape/visual effects in the particular context, and the measures incorporated into the scheme to mitigate such effects

Identifying and describing the likely landscape and visual effects

- provide an assessment of the sensitivity of the landscape in its context, taking in to account the susceptibility of the landscape receptor to the proposed change and the value attached to the landscape receptor
- provide an assessment of the sensitivity of the identified visual receptors, taking in to account the susceptibility of the visual receptor to the proposed change and the value attached to the particular view

- identify the potential landscape effects of the mitigated proposals (i.e the scheme) at key stages of the scheme: i.e. at completion of the scheme; and at 15 years after the completion of landscape works. This latter stage will be described as the residual landscape effect and will be summarised at the end of the assessment
- identify the potential effects of the scheme on views and visual amenity at the same key stages identified above
- assess the significance of the potential landscape effects and visual effects from public viewpoints, explaining clearly the reasoning behind the conclusions

Establishing the landscape and visual baseline

- 2.5. Baseline information on the landscape has been gathered through a combination of desk studies and field surveys.

Desk study

- 2.6. The following documents have been reviewed as part of the desk study:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2019)
- Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1997)
- Emerging Bury Local Plan (2018)
- National Landscape Character Area NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe.
- Bury Landscape Character Area Assessment (2019)

- 2.7. In addition, desk studies have included:

- review and analysis of landform, field and settlement patterns using Ordnance Survey mapping and public rights of way (PRoW) mapping
- review of landscape characteristics and landscape grain using aerial photographs
- review of available relevant site-specific technical reports, including ecology, Arboricultural Impact Assessment
- review of local published literature (local guidebooks, tourism leaflets etc) which may indicate the importance of trails, views, or landscape areas

- 2.8. Site observation taking in to account the existing terrain, vegetation and intervening development has established the visibility of the proposals.

Field work

- 2.9. A site survey was carried out by experienced professionals on the 30th April 2021.

- 2.10. The site survey has confirmed the following:

- the visual characteristics of the landscape
- the distribution and management of vegetation which affects site visibility
- the true extent of visibility of the site including the range of views of the site from

publicly accessible locations such as Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and roads in the vicinity

- any evidence to indicate valued views and viewpoints (e.g viewpoints)

- 2.11. Photographic surveys have been undertaken to record views from readily accessible public viewpoints. A digital SLR camera (Nikon D3300) with a 35mm fixed lens has been used with the camera handheld to obtain normal eye height. Photographs included in the assessment are presented with the intention of aiding the understanding of the descriptive text. Where appropriate, frames have been joined together to create panoramas which are representative of normal forward vision with a horizontal field of view of 120 degrees, and which may be extended up to a maximum of 180 degrees.

Identification of landscape and visual receptors

- 2.12. The landscape receptors which potentially could be affected and have been considered in the assessment are the effects on:
- Bury Landscape Character Area Assessment, Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)
 - the overall character of the site and immediate locality
 - landscape features within the site
- 2.13. The LVA will include a separate section to assess the potential effects of the development proposal on the 'perceived' openness of the Green Belt. This will not include volumetric calculations.
- 2.14. The LVA only considers publicly obtained views from public rights of way (PRoW), public open spaces and roads.
- 2.15. The visual receptors within the site and the immediate area which have been assessed are shown on **Figure 2** and include:
1. Users of PRoW 29CC to the south east
 2. Users of PRoW 42CC/access road to the former nursing home to the south
 3. Users of PRoW 32CC to the south and west
 4. Users of PRoW 35CC to the immediate north
 5. Users of PRoW 34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road to the distant north
 6. Users of PRoW 137BUR to the north of the reservoirs
 7. Users of PRoW 31CC to the north east and east

Receptors scoped out

- 2.16. The site falls within the National Character Area NCA 54 Manchester Pennine Fringe. The National Character Area covers large tracts of land, a key characteristic of which is urban settlement. As a small site located within an enclave of previous development, any effects

on the NCA 54 as a result of the development would be insignificant and have therefore been scoped out of the assessment.

- 2.17. The Bury Landscape Character Assessment shows the land to the north around the reservoirs as falling with Landscape Character Area 54/1b Fringe Industrial Brook. The site does not lie within this character area and the area would not be directly affected by the proposals. It is low-lying in relation to the site and because of the rolling topography to the south of the reservoirs, the landform obscures any views southwards. As such there would be no significant effects on the LCA 54/1b as a result of the proposals and it has been scoped out of the assessment.
- 2.18. Ainsworth Conservation Area is physically and visually remote from the site and the development would not result in any effects on the setting of the Conservation Area.
- 2.19. The visual assessment identifies the principal locations from which the site is visible. There may be some glimpsed or fleeting views towards the site from other footpaths and roads in the vicinity, but these are deemed to be inconsequential and have therefore not been assessed. The views from some footpaths are enclosed or substantially screened by vegetation and in some cases the undulating topography prevents views of the site.

Defining the study area

- 2.20. The study area as shown on **Figure 1** includes an area of at least 1km offset from the site boundary. This includes the northern parts of the settlement of Ainsworth and the farmland to the north. The study area is relatively small because the site is small scale and quite low-lying therefore discreet within the landscape. However, there are quite a lot of PRoWs within the vicinity and the topography rises to the north of the site, allowing some long-distance panoramic views southwards which include the site as a very minor element.

Establishing the value of the landscape

- 2.21. Landscape value is defined in GLVIA3 (para 5.19) as “*the relative value that is attached to different landscapes by society*”. Box 5.1 (GLVIA) lists a range of factors that are now generally agreed to help in valuing landscapes.
- 2.22. Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note TGN 02-21 ‘Assessing Landscape Value outside National Designations’ was published in May 2021. This provides information and guidance to landscape professionals and others who need to make judgments about the value of a landscape (outside national landscape designations) in the context of the UK Town and Country Planning system.
- 2.23. The value of the landscape is established taking in to account the landscape planning designations, the range of factors identified in Box 5.1 of GLVIA3 and advice contained within Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note TGN 02-21.

Describing the development and measures incorporated to mitigate potential effects

- 2.24. The assessment is based on the Proposed Site Layout and Landscape Proposals Plan submitted as part of the application.

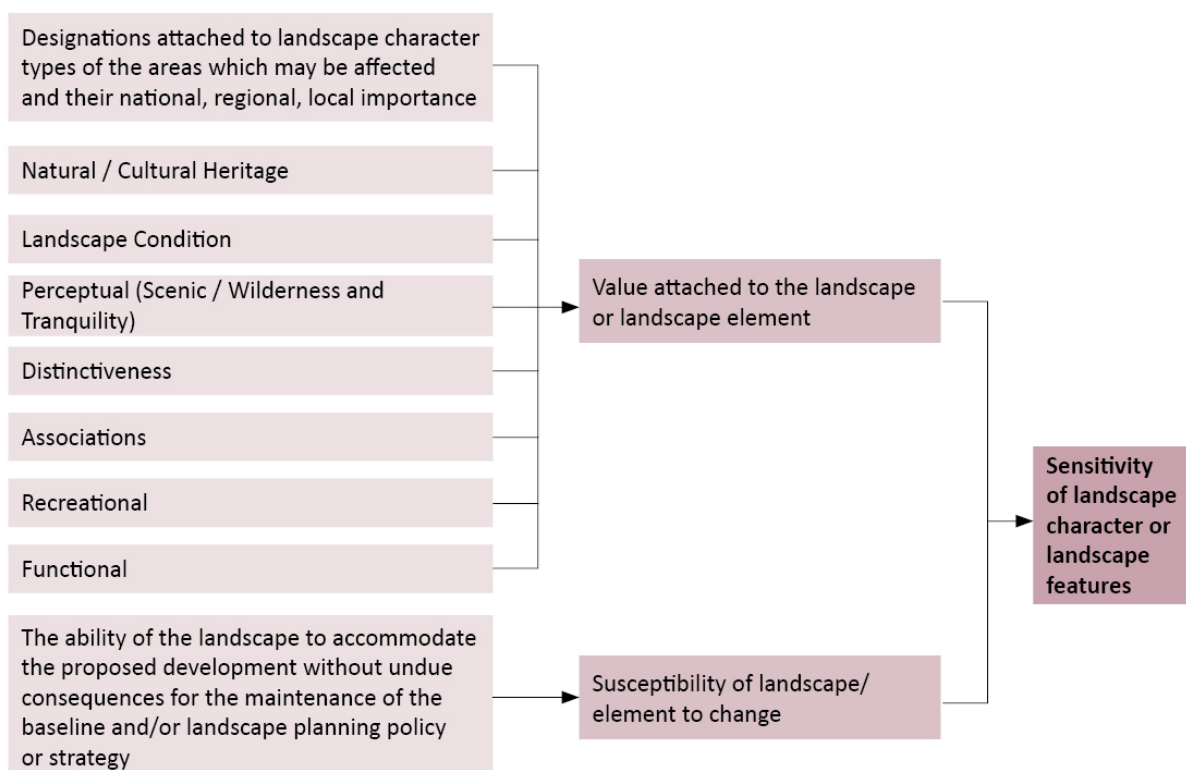
Identifying and describing the likely landscape and visual effects

Assumptions and limitation

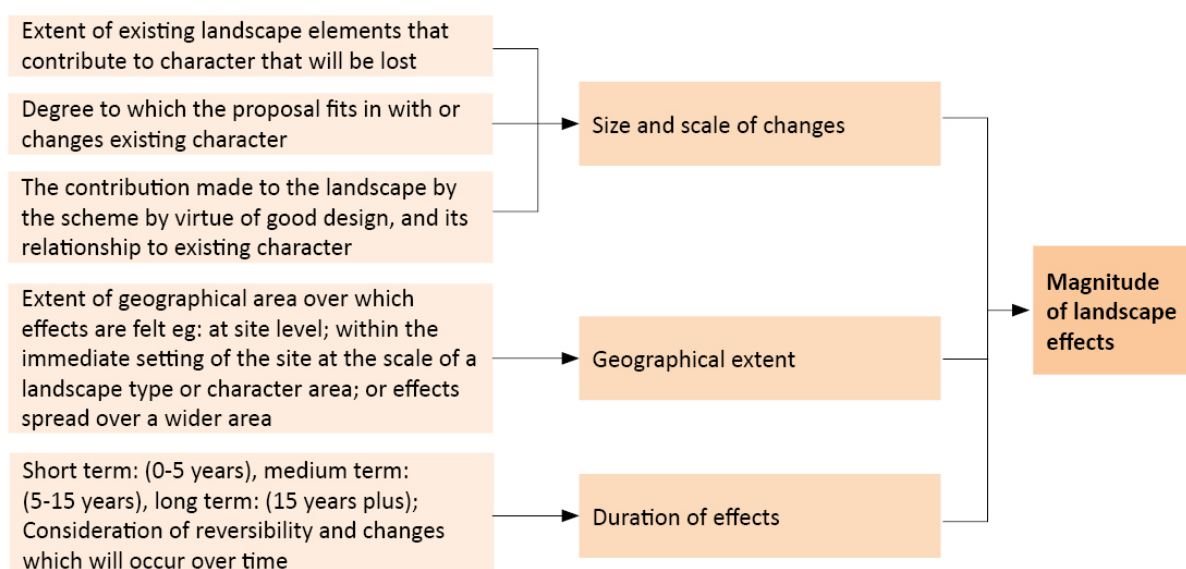
- 2.25. The assessment considers daytime effects. Night-time effects have not been considered because the site is not located within an intrinsically dark landscape (settlement is a feature of the landscape within the study area) and the principal viewpoints are roads and PRowS used in daylight hours. It is expected that views include existing sources of light from other nearby properties and cars and as such any change is expected to be negligible.
- 2.26. The assessment considers effects at initial completion of development and 15 years post completion i.e. when landscape treatments have matured. For the purposes of this assessment the height of structural planting 15 years post planting is assumed to be at least 8-10m. The 15 year post planting assessment represents the residual effects.
- 2.27. Effects on residential receptors outside of public areas are not included in the assessment as private views are not protected by national planning guidance or planning policy and impacts on living conditions are generally considered through a separate Residential Visual Amenity Assessment (RVAA).

Assessing the likely effects

- 2.28. In line with GLVIA3, the assessment is based on consideration of the sensitivity of landscape character, landscape features, and views/viewers to the type of development being proposed, (i.e. housing) and on the magnitude of change likely to occur. The sensitivity and magnitude are then considered together, and conclusions drawn on the potential effects on the landscape or on people's visual amenity.
- 2.29. For each landscape and visual receptor, a wide range of considerations are drawn together as indicated by **Diagrams 1 and 2**.

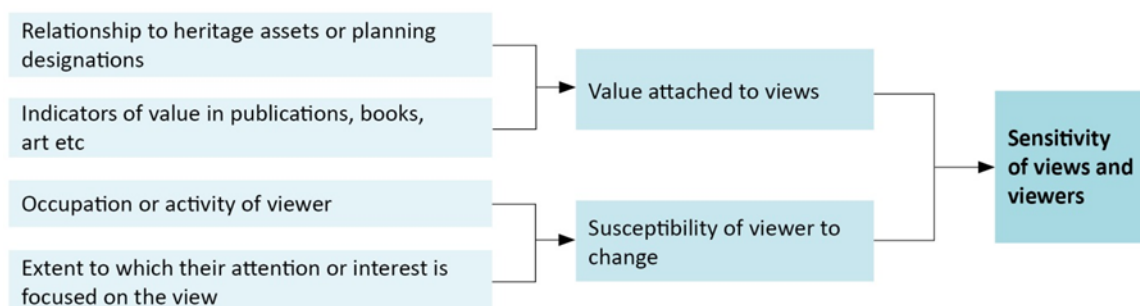
Diagram 1: Considerations contributing to establishing the significance of landscape effects.

A **Overall Judgement in respect of sensitivity:** Combines all of these considerations and is explained in text. It will be described as *High, Medium, Low or Negligible* depending on the combination of circumstances

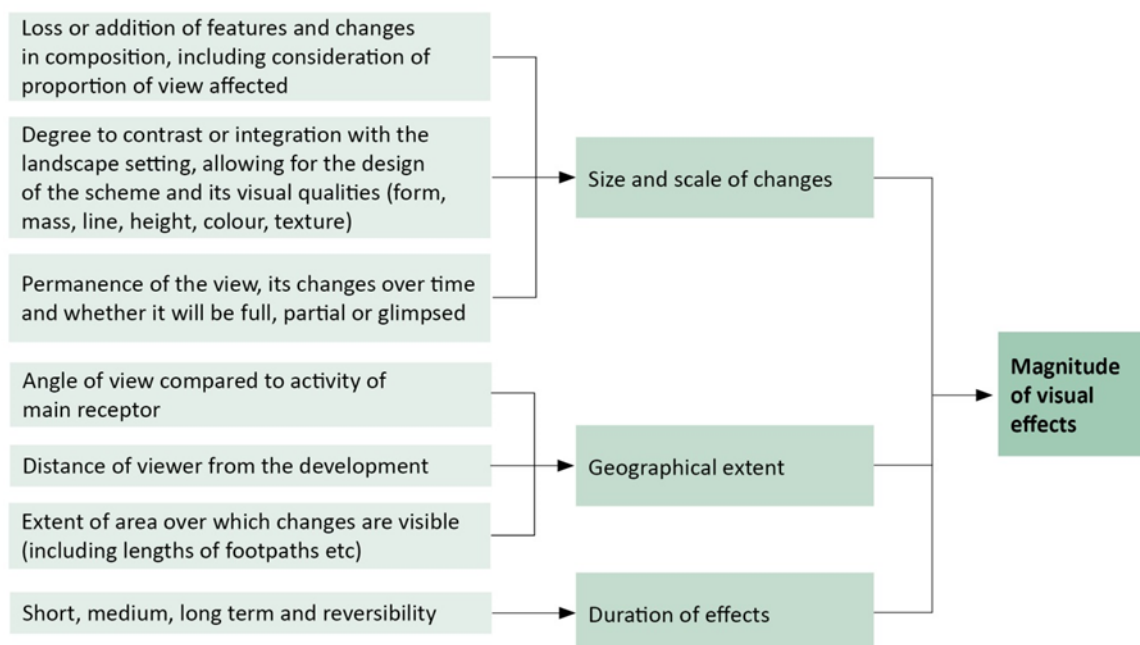


B **Overall judgement in respect of magnitude of landscape effects:** Combines all of these considerations and is explained in text. It will be described as *High, Medium, Low or Negligible* depending on the combination of circumstances

A + B = C **Judgement of effects:** Combines sensitivity and magnitude in a considered way and will be described as *Major, Moderate, Minor, Negligible, and as Beneficial, Adverse or Neutral* depending on the circumstances

Diagram 2: Considerations contributing to establishing the significance of visual effects.

Overall Judgement in respect of sensitivity: Combines these considerations which are explained in the text. It will be described as *High, Medium or Low* depending on the combination of circumstances



Overall judgement in respect of magnitude of visual effects: combines these considerations which are explained in text. It will be described as *High, Medium, Low or Negligible* depending on the combination of circumstances



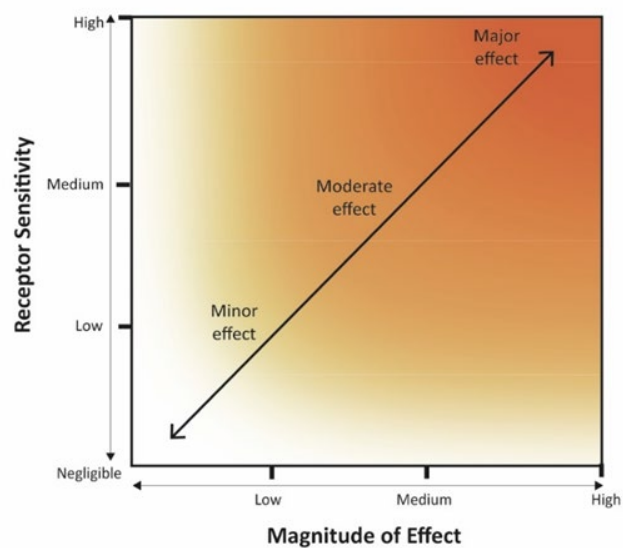
A + B = C

Judgement of effects: Combines sensitivity and magnitude in a considered way taking into account the pleasantness of the existing and resultant view, and will be described as *Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible*, and as either *Beneficial, Adverse or Neutral* depending on the circumstances

- 2.30. The effects of the proposed development on the landscape and visual receptors identified above will be described as being Major, Moderate, Minor or Negligible and either Adverse, Beneficial or Neutral. The scale at which the effect will be felt will be identified (i.e. at Site level, within the immediate setting of the site, at the scale of a landscape character type or character area, effects spread over a wider area).

- 2.31. **Diagram 3** below indicates the general relationship between sensitivity and magnitude of change. However, this will not be applied in a prescriptive manner and professional judgement will be used to assess the balance of the effect according to the individual circumstances.

Diagram 3: Indicative guide to relationship between sensitivity and magnitude of change



3. Planning and policy framework

National Planning Policy

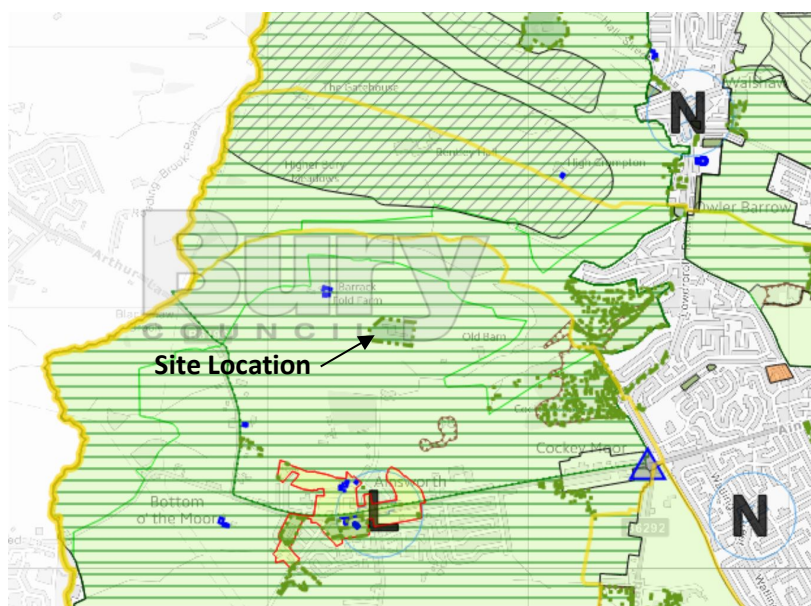
- 3.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019) promotes a presumption in favour of sustainable development for both plan-making and decision-taking (Paragraph 11).
- 3.2. Of most relevance are:
 - Section 12, Achieving Well-Designed Places (paragraphs 124 and 132)
 - Section 13, Protecting Green Belt land (paragraphs 133-145)
 - Section 15, Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment (paragraph 170-183)

National Design Guide

- 3.3. The Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government published the National Design Guide in October 2019, which '*illustrates how well-designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.*' It encompasses all current best practice thinking in urban design.
- 3.4. The National Design Guide identifies the components for good design and emphasises that good design should not only pay attention to buildings. Careful attention should also be given to the context for places and buildings, hard and soft landscape, technical infrastructure - transport, utilities and services such as drainage, and social infrastructure - social commercial, leisure uses and activities.

Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1997))

- 3.5. The current Bury UDP was adopted by the Council on 29 August 1997.



- 3.6. The extract of the UDP Proposals Map above shows that the land to the west of Bury is indicated as Green Belt. This is set out within Policy OL1 – Green Belt as follows:

'OL1 - GREEN BELT

The Council will maintain a Green Belt, ensuring that it fulfils the following strategic purposes:

- _ to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- _ to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;*
- _ to assist in safeguarding the countryside from further encroachment;*
- _ to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;*
- _ to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.'*

- 3.7. This is a spatial policy which is not related to landscape quality objectives. The Green Belt includes the settlement of Ainsworth and washes over the cluster of existing building formed by the former nursing home.

'OL1/1 - Designation of Green Belt

The Council will operate development control policies over a Green Belt as delineated on the Proposals Map. The Green Belt includes the following broad open land areas:

- _ that part of the open land area within the Borough between Bolton and Bury from the Greater Manchester boundary in the north to Little Lever and Radcliffe in the south and incorporating the settlements of Hawkshaw and Ainsworth;....'*

'OL1/3 - Infilling in Existing Villages in the Green Belt

In all named villages which lie within the Green Belt, limited infill development may be permitted, provided that it is in scale with the village and would not adversely affect its character or surroundings.'

- 3.8. The land to the north of Ainsworth is also shown within an area called West Pennine Moors which is covered by Policy OL7/2. This states:

'Throughout the area of the West Pennine Moors, as defined on the Proposals Map, the Council will control development and manage recreational activity and public access, so as to reduce any possible detrimental effects these may have on the important character of the area. In considering proposals for development particular regard will be had to the effect on the following:

- a) agriculture and forestry;*
- b) water catchment;*
- c) settlements;*
- d) landscape character;*
- e) ecological and geological features;*
- f) archaeological and historic features.'*

- 3.9. Policy EN1/3 - Landscaping Provision covers the landscape proposals of development schemes and states:

'Development proposals will be required to make provision for incidental open space and landscaping to the Council's satisfaction.'

- 3.10. Policy EN9 concerns the landscape and states:

'EN9 - LANDSCAPE

The Council will seek to protect, conserve and improve the landscape quality of the Borough, and will encourage the enhancement of landscapes, where appropriate.'

- 3.11. A large expanse of land to the west of Bury is shown on the proposals map as Special Landscape Area (green lined hatch) and this is covered by Policy EN 9/1 which states:

'EN9/1 - Special Landscape Areas

In those areas identified on the Proposals Map as Special Landscape Areas, any development which is permitted will be strictly controlled and required to be sympathetic to its surroundings in terms of its visual impact. High standards of design, siting and landscaping will be expected. Unduly obtrusive development will not be permitted in such areas.'

- 3.12. Policy EN8 concerns woodland and trees and states:

'EN8 - WOODLAND AND TREES

The Council will support the retention of trees, woods, copses and hedgerows and encourage natural regeneration and new and replacement tree planting throughout the Borough.'

- 3.13. The Proposals map shows that the trees within the former nursing home site are protected by a group TPO.

'EN8/1 - Tree Preservation Orders

The Council will make Tree Preservation Orders where they are needed to protect trees and woodlands.'

Emerging Bury Local Plan (2018)

- 3.14. Bury Council are in the process of preparing a new Local Plan that will guide future development within the Borough. The Local Plan Policy Directions sets out the proposed scope and a more refined direction for the planning policies that the Local Plan will contain. Consultation on the Policy Directions for the Bury Local Plan ended on 30th November 2018 and the Council will be taking all comments into account in moving onto and consulting on a draft Local Plan.

- 3.15. The following Policy Directions are of relevance to the LVA:

- 3.16. Policy Direction NE6 – Landscape Character states:

'It is proposed that the Local Plan should include a policy that seeks to protect, conserve and improve the landscape quality of the Borough, and encourage the enhancement of landscapes, where appropriate.'

3.17. Policy Direction GB1 – Development in the Green Belt states:

'It is proposed that the Local Plan should include a policy that seeks to ensure that the development of new buildings within the Green Belt will be regarded as inappropriate unless very special circumstances can be clearly demonstrated. It is considered that the policy should also set out the types of development that would be treated as an exception or which would not be regarded as inappropriate provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt.'

3.18. Policy Direction GB3 – Conversion and Re-use of Buildings in the Green Belt

'It is proposed that the Local Plan should include a policy that seeks to ensure that the conversion and re-use of buildings in the Green Belt is not inappropriate development and will be permitted providing that it satisfies specified criteria.'

3.19. Policy Direction GB4 – Village Settlements in the Green Belt

'It is proposed that the Local Plan should include a policy that seeks to ensure that Green Belt designations (as identified through the GMSF) should be maintained across the Borough's village settlements. It is proposed that the policy should specifically identify the Borough's village settlements within the Green Belt and restrict development within them to limited infilling that is in scale with the village and that which would not adversely affect its character and surroundings.'

4. Landscape baseline and sensitivity assessment

Bury Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) (2009)

- 4.1. The Bury LCA builds upon the three national character types that are present within Bury Borough area (NCA 36, 54 and 55) to provide a more detailed district approach.
 - 4.2. The specific objectives of the study are to:
 - *To break down national / regional character areas identified by the Countryside Agency (South Pennines, Manchester Pennine Fringe and Manchester Conurbation) into character types and areas at the district level;*
 - *To classify the landscape of the Borough into distinct landscape types and areas (zones of homogenous character) at a scale of 1:25,000 scale;*
 - *To describe the current appearance of the landscape, identifying the key characteristics and summarising the key cultural and natural features;*
 - *To provide a baseline for monitoring future change.'*
 - 4.3. The three Landscape Character Types covering the Bury area have been subdivided into Landscape Character Areas. The site falls within the National Character Area 54, Manchester Pennine Fringe and within the West Pennine Foothills Landscape Character Area 54/3. This includes *'the small hills located between Bury and Bolton'*. This landscape Character Area is split into 54/3a Affetside and 54/3b Ainsworth. The southern part of the study area which includes the site falls within 54/3b.
 - 4.4. **Figure 1** (Appendix A) shows the landscape character areas in the vicinity of the site.
 - 4.5. **Appendix B** includes relevant extracts from the Bury Landscape Character Assessment.
- Landscape Character Area 54/3 - West Pennine Foothills**
- 4.6. The following description of the landscape is taken from the Landscape Character Assessment.

'Landscape description

The West Pennine Foothills at Ainsworth and Affetside form the western fringe of the borough between the towns of Bolton and Bury. The hills are composed of distinctive bands of sandstone and undivided sedimentary rock covered by a layer of till with exposed solid rock at higher altitudes. These glaciated rounded hills are lower in altitude than the moor land plateau areas in the northern part of the borough. The area around Affetside is the larger of the two hills with an altitude range between 160 to 260m above sea level. The area around Ainsworth is smaller with a height range between 120 to 170m above sea level. The hills have

long distance views overlooking the town of Bury and Bolton and the height and exposure of the hill at Affetside creates an added sense of wilderness overlooking the Two Brooks Valley.

The hills contain small ponds throughout with small streams along the lower parts of the slope. These streams feed into Kirklees, Walshaw or Elton Brook at the base of the hill as well as Elton and Withins reservoir. The lower parts of the slope on both hills contain large areas designated Great Crested Newt sites. The area around Ainsworth is ecologically richer of the two hills with several protected species sites, a wildlife link and a local ecological designation.

The landscape is characterised by sparse woodland cover with some pockets of coniferous woods on the hill tops and peripheral plantation woodland located at the base of the hill. The hills contain a mosaic of improved and semi improved neutral grassland with the occasional pocket of amenity grassland in peripheral areas. Both areas have a grade 4 agricultural land quality rating in an area which suffers from over grazing on the lower slopes.

Both hills are dissected by main roads which cross over the crest of the hill making the area an accessible recreational resource for the surrounding urban areas with a number of recreational facilities and an extensive rights of way network. The origins of the road at Affetside are Roman forming part of the historic route between Lancashire and Manchester. The road at Ainsworth form one of the more direct routes between the towns of Bury and Bolton. Both roads are crossed by power lines which run through the two hills on a north-south axis. Although the area is squeezed between Bury and Bolton the area contains only pockets of settlement which are limited to the roadside and form part of the main villages of Affetside or Ainsworth. These settlements contain church spires which mark the centre of the village and which act as landmarks throughout the area. The surrounding hillside has an even distribution of archaeological sites throughout although their distribution is more sparsely distributed when compared to the brook landscapes in neighbouring areas.

The field pattern of the area is defined with hedgerows especially along the lower levels with a small cluster of dry stone walls on the north facing slope at Affetside overlooking the Two Brooks Valley. The area suffers from a loss of traditional field boundaries which have over recent years been replaced with post wire fencing. From an historical context these fields were disrupted by sandstone quarries and coal pits dating back to 1848. By 1910 these coal pits had closed and both areas saw an increase in dwellings on the hill top. By 1953 / 1967 the area saw the introduction of power lines and an increase in residential properties at Ainsworth Village.'

- 4.7. The study area exhibits the characteristics of Landscape Character Area 54/ 3, West Pennine Foothills, although the southern areas are more influenced by the fringes of Ainsworth which include land uses such as golf courses and nurseries. Woodland plantations are also a feature of the lower lying areas to the north of Ainsworth.
- 4.8. The land around the reservoirs lies within the Landscape Character Area 54/1 Fringe Industrial Brooks and within the subset of 1b Walshaw and Elton. The effects on this landscape character area have been scoped out as described in the methodology above. However, the following extracts from the landscape character area description are included for context.

'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.'

'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.'

Local landscape character context

- 4.9. **Figure 1 (Appendix A)** shows the broad context of the site in relation to its surrounding areas.
- 4.10. **Figure 2 (Appendix A)** is an OS map of the context showing the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) and contours.
- 4.11. The study area comprises the settlement of Ainsworth and an expanse of open land which rises to the north, as well as the land surrounding the reservoirs.
- 4.12. In relation to Ainsworth Conservation Area, Bury Council website states:

'Ainsworth village lies to the northwest of Bury and was developed as a typical upland farming settlement at a nucleus around the old Bury and Bolton Road. The Conservation Area covers the core of the later surviving parts of the village and includes 19 century stone terraces along Church Street and earlier buildings around the Church and Chapel. The buildings are predominantly constructed of stone and the area is much enhanced by substantial groups of trees and public and private open spaces.'
- 4.13. There are several clusters of listed buildings within Ainsworth Conservation Area. The farmhouse and barns at Barrack Fold date from the 17th and 18th centuries and are Grade II listed.
- 4.14. The site is distant from the Conservation Area and there is no visual connection. There are broadleaved trees and a large block of coniferous woodland located immediately north of Ainsworth and this provides separation between the Conservation Area and the land to the north.
- 4.15. The open land includes small to medium scale fields divided by a mix of hedgerows and fences. The hedgerows generally do not include trees and in many cases they are fragmented. As well as the block of coniferous woodland there are groups of trees around the settlement edges, within the golf courses and surrounding the former nursing home.
- 4.16. Other land uses to the west and north-west of Ainsworth include Breightmet and Harwood golf courses as well as garden centres and nurseries.
- 4.17. Lowercroft reservoirs lie close to the settlement edge between Ainsworth and Walshaw.

There is a fair amount of tree planting to the east and south east of the reservoirs but otherwise the land surrounding them is quite open.

- 4.18. Immediately north of Ainsworth the topography is gently undulating and rolling with low points of around 145mAOD, around the lower lying reservoirs. The ground level rise northwards to towards Bentley Hall Road, with high ground of over 200m AOD.
- 4.19. Narrow roads and tracks provide access to the farms and residential properties scattered within the farmland. Several of the farms, particularly those located near to Bentley Hall Road, encompass various large barns and areas of storage which given them an untidy appearance.
- 4.20. Other detracting features of the landscape include the telecommunication mast on Bentley Hall Road and the pylons which cross the landscape to the west of the study area.
- 4.21. There are numerous PRoW which link northwards from Ainsworth, crossing through the landscape and running along Bentley Hall Road. From the elevated sections of these routes to the north of the study area, there are panoramic, long distance views. The visual character of the footpaths with views of the site will be explained further within the following section.

Description of the site and its surroundings

- 4.22. **Figure 3 (Appendix A)** shows the features of the site within its immediate setting.
- 4.23. **Figure 4 (Appendix A)** includes photographs of the site.
- 4.24. The site comprises the south-western corner of the former nursing home and is accessed from the former access road, which is an extension of Knowsley Road. It includes rough grassland and a single storey Gate House building as well as mature trees along its southern and western boundaries. There are also mature trees along the site's eastern boundary, where it fronts onto the access road. The northern boundary is defined by a low, ornamental hedgerow.
- 4.25. The entire former nursing home site, including the application site, is well enclosed by peripheral existing trees which are protected by a group TPO (346/ 2019).
- 4.26. Many of the former nursing home buildings remain and are located to the east and north of the site. These are a mix of 2 storey and single storey with the older buildings being constructed from red brick with slate roofs. Recent development includes alterations to the former bungalow to raise the roof creating a 2 storey property.
- 4.27. This enclave of former development is surrounded by fields and separated from the northern edge of Ainsworth by a narrow strip of farmland.
- 4.28. The site is reasonably flat with a very gentle slope southward.

- 4.29. A Tree Survey has been undertaken by Mulberry TMC. It identifies 5 groups of trees. Groups 1 and 2 are located adjacent to the access road on the eastern boundary of the site and comprise mixed, linear groups of sycamore, ash, beech, hawthorn and lime, collectively over 20m tall. The tree survey values them as category B2 (moderate quality) and recommends felling of 2 ash trees which have ash dieback and diseased lime. Groups 3 and 4 are mixed species groups located along the southern and western boundaries. They reach heights of around 16-18m tall, are categorised as A2 (high quality) and comprise sycamore, ash, sweet chestnut, laburnum, elm and hawthorn. A couple of ash trees are recommended for removal due to ash dieback. Group 5 is a group of ash and elderberry, categorised as U and therefore unsuitable for retention.
- 4.30. The implications of the development upon the existing trees will be discussed further when considering the assessment of effects on features within the site.

Summary of landscape receptors

- 4.31. Taking into account the published character assessments and baseline landscape context as described above, the following landscape receptors are considered:
- Bury Landscape Character Area Assessment, Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)
 - landscape character of the site and immediate locality
 - existing landscape features within the site

Landscape value

- 4.32. This section sets out the value of the landscape receptors within the study area using the guidelines of GLVIA3 Box 5.1 and Diagram 1 included within the Methodology above.

Table 1: Landscape value of Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)

Criteria for value	Observations/comments	Value
Designations attached to the landscape	Special Landscape Area (policy EN 9/1) West Pennine Moors (policy OL7/2) TPO Green Belt (policy OL1)	Local Landscape Value Green Belt (national)
Natural heritage	Two sites of Nature Conservation Interest (Local Nature Reserves and Grade B and C Sites of Biological Importance).	Medium
Cultural heritage	Ainsworth Conservation Area. Listed Buildings within the Ainsworth and at Barrack Fold Farm.	Medium
Landscape condition	Rural fringe landscape with scattered farms interspersed with small settlements and golf courses. Moderately well managed with a distinguishable landscape structure and characteristic field pattern of small to medium scale fields. Some loss of hedgerows in favour of fencing and few hedgerow trees. Woodland plantations. Some common features worthy of conservation and some detracting features such as pylons.	Medium

Criteria for value	Observations/comments	Value
Perceptual (Scenic)	The scenic quality of the landscape is varied. Around the settlement edges there are urban influences with some larger commercial buildings and golf courses visible. The land is low-lying, and the views are more enclosed by vegetation. To the north, the ground levels rise and there is less enclosure by vegetation allowing some wide panoramic views towards the outskirts of Bury and Bolton.	Medium
Perceptual (Wilderness and tranquility)	The study area includes settlement and is not considered to be wilderness. There is greater tranquility to the north away from the urban edges, but this landscape also contains more urban elements such as pylons, telecommunication masts and farms which have an industrial character.	Medium-low
Distinctiveness	Whilst some of the key characteristics are present, the landscape within the study area does not include distinctive or representative features. The landscape does not include uncommon characteristics or features considered to be rare.	Low
Associations	There is no evidence of any association with artists, writers or historical events.	Low
Recreational	Numerous PRoW which forms circular waymarked routes.	High
Functional	Agricultural landscape/settlement which has limited functional value and does not perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function ie, it is not an area of undisturbed and healthy soils, an area of diverse landcover pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows.	Medium-low
Value of Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)		Overall value: Medium

Table 2: Landscape value of the site and immediate locality

Criteria for value	Observations/comments	Value
Designations attached to the landscape	Special Landscape Area (policy EN 9/1) West Pennine Moors (policy OL7/2) TPO Green Belt (policy OL1)	Local Landscape Value Green Belt (national)
Natural heritage	Two sites of Nature Conservation Interest (Local Nature Reserves and Grade B and C Sites of Biological Importance).	Medium
Cultural heritage	Ainsworth Conservation Area. Listed Buildings within the Ainsworth and at Barrack Fold Farm.	Medium
Landscape condition	A pleasant landscape but one which is heavily influenced by its close proximity to the settlement of Ainsworth.	Medium-low
Perceptual (Scenic)	Views are restricted by vegetation and include built form within the site of the former nursing home and on the fringes of Ainsworth.	Medium-low
Perceptual (Wilderness and tranquility)	The landscape is not considered to be wild or tranquil due to its proximity to the urban edge	Low
Distinctiveness	The immediate locality does not contain particular characteristic features which are considered particularly important examples. The landscape within the immediate locality does not have rare or unusual qualities.	Low

Criteria for value	Observations/comments	Value
Associations	There is no evidence of any association with artists, writers or historical events.	Low
Recreational	Numerous PROW which forms circular waymarked routes.	High
Functional	Agricultural landscape/settlement which has limited functional value and does not perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function	Medium-low
Value of the landscape character of the site and immediate locality		Overall value: Medium

- 4.33. The site and immediate locality are not considered to be a valued landscape under the NPPF paragraph 170 definition.

Table 3: Landscape value of the features within the site

Criteria for value	Observations/comments	Value
Designations attached to the landscape	Special Landscape Area (policy EN 9/1) West Pennine Moors (policy OL7/2) TPO Green Belt (policy OL1)	Local Landscape Value Green Belt (national)
Natural heritage	No designated wildlife sites. Boundary trees of some conservation importance. The ecological report states <i>'The site contains only common and widespread plant species. None of the habitats within the site are of significant interest in terms of their plant species composition. None of the habitats present are representative of semi-natural habitat. The NVC communities present are typical of the geographical area and conditions present. No Priority Habitats are present at the site'</i> .	Medium
Cultural heritage	There are no heritage assets within the site.	Low
Landscape condition	The site comprises grassland, an existing building and mature boundary trees which are protected by TPO.	Medium-low
Perceptual (Scenic)	The site makes little or no contribution to the scenic quality of the wider area as it is well enclosed by existing vegetation. The existing buildings within the wider nursing home site are partially visible and urbanise the views.	Low
Perceptual (Wilderness and tranquility)	The site includes the former nursing home buildings and is not considered to be wild or tranquil.	Low
Distinctiveness	The site does not contain a particular character or features which are considered particularly important examples. There are no rare landscape features within the site.	Low
Associations	There is no evidence of any association with artists, writers or historical events.	Low
Recreational	The site is not accessible and has no recreational value.	Low
Functional	The site comprises land associated with the former care home and does not perform a valuable landscape function.	Low
Value of the landscape features within the site		Overall value: Medium-low

Susceptibility to change

Susceptibility to change of Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)

- 4.34. Within the study area, the landscape character area includes the settlement of Ainsworth and the rural landscape to the north. It is an attractive landscape with undulating landform, semi-natural landcover and a simple landscape pattern. Near to the settlement edge the views are partially enclosed. There are long panoramic views from the areas to the north. The landscape is closely associated with human activity and housing development is part of the character. The scale of the development is appropriate to the scale of the landscape. It is therefore considered that the susceptibility to change is **low**.

Susceptibility to change of the landscape character within the immediate locality

- 4.35. The immediate locality includes housing on the edge of Ainsworth. The site itself has been part of the nursing home and has a more urban character. Views are partially enclosed by settlement and vegetation. The landscape character of the site and the immediate locality is influenced by human activity. The type of development proposed is common in the wider area to the immediate south and would be in keeping with the surrounding proposed land uses. It is therefore considered that the susceptibility to change is **low**.

Susceptibility to change of the landscape features

- 4.36. The trees within the site are protected by a group TPO but have clear potential to be retained. Otherwise, the site comprises areas of grass and a building which is part of the former nursing home. It is therefore considered that the susceptibility to change is **medium-low**.

Sensitivity of the landscape

- 4.37. Taking into account value and susceptibility as set out above the following table summarises the sensitivity of the landscape.

Table 4: Landscape sensitivity

Landscape receptor	Value of the Landscape	Susceptibility to Change	Resulting Sensitivity
Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)	Medium	Low	Medium-low
The landscape character of the site and immediate locality	Medium	Low	Medium-low
Landscape features within the site	Medium-low	Medium-low	Medium-low

5. Visual baseline and sensitivity of visual receptors

Visual receptors and views of the site

- 5.1. **Figure 2 (Appendix A)** illustrates the locations of the photographs taken from the public viewpoints surrounding the site.
 - 5.2. **Figures 4 to 9** include the photographs which are taken from publicly accessible viewpoints along PRow's.
 - 5.3. Observations made during the site visit identified views towards the site from the following publicly accessible viewpoints:
 1. Users of PRow 29CC to the south east
 2. Users of PRow 42CC/access road to the former nursing home to the south
 3. Users of PRow 32CC to the south and west
 4. Users of PRow 35CC to the immediate north
 5. Users of PRow 34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road to the distant north
 6. Users of PRow 137BUR to the north of the reservoirs
 7. Users of PRow 31CC to the north east and east
 - 5.4. Views from these locations are representative of the likely views of the proposals from public rights of way, roads and public open spaces.
- 1. Existing views from PRow 29CC to the south-east (Photograph 1)**
- 5.5. PRow 29CC runs north from Ainsworth following a paved access road, around 650m to the south-east of the site. There is a hedgerow running along the western side of the route which largely screens views towards the site. Photograph 1 shows the view where there is a gap in the hedgerow, allowing a fleeting and glimpsed view in a north westerly direction. There is a long view across intervening fields with the block of woodland located on the outskirts of Ainsworth a noticeable feature in the view. The trees and some existing buildings within the site of the former nursing home are partially visible in the distance. The site itself is largely screened by the boundary trees.
- 2. Existing views from PRow 42CC/access road to the former nursing home to the south (Photograph 2)**
- 5.6. PRow 42CC is well enclosed by hedgerows on both sides and the woodland plantation to the west. Looking north there are channeled views down the road with the white rendered cottages at the end, a noticeable feature. The site, at approximately 250m away, is unseen or barely perceptible from the PRow. Walking north of the cottages, onto the access road to the former nursing home, the views open out and as Photograph 2 shows there is a much wider view. There is no hedgerow along the access road so the fields either side are visible. The former nursing home buildings are partially visible behind the boundary vegetation. The

grassland within the site and Gate House building are barely perceptible due to the screening effects of the boundary trees.

3. Existing views from PRoW 32CC to the south and west (Photographs 3.1 and 3.2)

- 5.7. PRoW 32CC runs from the access road to the former nursing home in a westerly direction before tracking northwards towards Barrack Fold Farm. The route is between 200-250m away from the site. Photograph 3.1 is the view looking north-east towards the site as the route doglegs to head northwards. The view is across the intervening fields with a fragmented hedgerow and trees partially screening the existing buildings within the former nursing home. Views of the site are filtered by the boundary trees. Photograph 3.2 is the view from the route directly west of the site. The photograph illustrates that the existing hedgerow and trees around the former nursing home provide substantial screening of the existing buildings.

4. Existing views from PRoW 35CC to the immediate north (Photograph 4)

- 5.8. PRoW 35CC runs in an east-west direction around 150m to the north of the site. It runs through a field and there are open views looking south. Photograph 4 shows that in views looking southwards, the buildings within the former nursing home are filtered by the boundary trees. The vegetation along the western part of the northern boundary provides good screening and the Gate House building within the site is not visible.

5. Existing views from PRoW 34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road to the north (Photograph 5)

- 5.9. PRoW 34CC runs from Barrack Fold Farm northwards to Old Holts. The topography is undulating, and Barrack Fold Farm sits on a minor ridgeline with the ground levels falling to the immediate north of the farm. The landform and intervening built form mean that the site is not visible from the southern sections of this route. The route passes the Harwood Golf Course, and the ground levels then begin to rise. From the northern sections of this route there are wide panoramic views looking south, east and west. Similar views are possible from PRoW 47CC which follows Bentley Hall Road. Photograph 5 is the view from PRoW 47CC/Bentley Hall Road 870m to the north of the site. Looking south, Barrack Hall Farm and the woodland plantation on the outskirts of Ainsworth are noticeable features. The trees within the former nursing home area are visible as a minor element in a wide view. These trees substantially screen the former nursing home buildings, and the site itself is indistinguishable.

6. Existing views from PRoW 137BUR to the north of the reservoirs (Photographs 6.1 and 6.2)

- 5.10. PRoW 137BUR links southwards from Bentley Hall Road towards the reservoirs. The route is between 830m and 450m away from the site. Photograph 6.1 is the view looking south from the northern parts of the route which are elevated. The reservoirs are not visible as they sit within a dip in the landform. The trees within the former nursing home and the woodland plantation appear to blend as a distant block. The roofs of buildings located in Ainsworth are partially visible in the distance. The former nursing home buildings are barely discernible, and the site is indistinguishable. Photograph 6.2 is the view from further south, nearer to the reservoirs. From this low-lying position the roll in the landform means that only the tops of

the trees within the former nursing home site are visible and the buildings are screened.

7. Existing views from PRoW 31CC to the north east and east (viewpoints 7.1 and 7.2)

- 5.11. PRoW 31CC runs from the reservoirs southwards towards Ainsworth. It is located approximately 370m away at its furthest point and around 150m away as it passes the former nursing home. Photograph 7.1 is the view looking south from the route immediately south of the reservoirs. The trees within the former nursing home area substantially screen the remaining built form and the site is well hidden. Photograph 7.2 is the view from the route to the south east of the site. It shows that the building which has replaced the former bungalow is partially visible within the trees. The site sits behind this building in this view and is largely screened.

Summary

- 5.12. The site is low lying and is well contained by existing trees. In near views from the south and west, the existing buildings within the former nursing home are partially visible and there are filtered views of the site. The trees within the former nursing home and the existing built form screen views of the site from the east and the north. There are distant views towards the site from elevated land to the north. These views include the settlement edge. At distances of around 500-800m, the woodland within the former nursing home is visible as a small part of a wider view and does a good job at concealing the buildings within.

Value and sensitivity of views

- 5.13. As set out within **Diagram 2** of the Methodology and in GLVIA3 the sensitivity of views and viewers derives from a combination of the value to be attached to the view (as indicated by planning designations, relationships to heritage assets, association with art etc.) and the susceptibility of the viewer to change indicated by their occupation or activity and extent to which their attention is focused on the view. It is considered to be an ordinary landscape which is locally valued.
- 5.14. The susceptibility of a viewer to change in the landscape will vary according to their location and occupation or activity. **Table 5** below, sets out the susceptibility to change and sensitivity of the identified visual receptors.

Table 5: Visual sensitivity

Visual receptor	Value of the View	Susceptibility to Change	Resulting Sensitivity
Pedestrians using PRoWs	Medium Local value attached to the views. Some longer views to the wider landscape and views of open land in the context of the existing settlement edge. Views do not have heritage value or cultural associations. A pleasant but unremarkable landscape which is not considered to be a popular visitor attraction.	High The landscape setting is likely to be valued by those engaged in informal recreation.	High-medium

6. Scheme proposals and mitigation

6.1. The proposals are shown on the following plans:

- Proposed Site Layout (JPE Consultancy Limited)
- Landscape Proposals Plan (Randall Thorp)

Proposed built form and layout

- 6.2. The site would be divided into two plots with a two-storey dwelling built centrally within each plot. The proposals include for the retention of the Gate House within the southern plot, as guest accommodation.
- 6.3. Access would be from the existing access track and the houses would front onto this with private driveways, parking and front gardens. There would be a private garden to the rear of each dwelling. This would comprise an area of amenity grass, and a paved patio.
- 6.4. Boundaries would comprise post and rail fencing and native hedgerows. Driveways and parking areas would be surfaced with permeable bound gravel. Where the hard standing tracks within the root protection area of existing trees, Cellweb TRP cellular confinement system with aggregate fill and resin bound gravel wearing course would be used.
- 6.5. The dwellings would reference the existing buildings within the immediate context in terms of form and materials. Pitched and hipped roofs are proposed with varying heights of roofs similar to the existing buildings. The dwellings would reduce down to single storey at the rear and incorporate dormers, in a similar style to those within the Administration Block and Wash House. Similar materials are proposed with red brick facings, slate roofs with red clay ridge and hip tiles. References to the existing surrounding buildings include similar detailing to brick heads and sills, brick arch detailing to door surrounds and tall windows.
- 6.6. In terms of height, the proposed dwellings would be marginally taller than the former bungalow (now extended to two-storeys) but lower than other existing buildings within the site.

Retention of existing vegetation

- 6.7. There would be the loss of some rough or amenity grassland where paving is proposed and within the footprint of the proposed houses.
- 6.8. The tree survey recommends the felling of Group 5 as they are category U and unsuitable for retention. It also recommends the felling of a total of four ash trees due to ash dieback and a single diseased lime. Compensatory planting of extra heavy standard native trees is proposed.

- 6.9. The layout allows the retention of all other trees around the periphery of the site. These trees provide enclosure and visual screening.
- 6.10. The existing hedgerow growing along the northern boundary is non-native laurel and as an ornamental species it is of lesser ecological value. In accordance with the ecological recommendations the hedge would be removed and replaced with a species-rich native hedgerow of the same length.

Landscape proposals

- 6.11. Planting proposals are shown on the Landscape Proposals Plan. The proposals aim to provide an appropriate setting for the built form to help integrate it into the surrounding landscape. They aim to enhance the ecological interest and habitat connectivity and seek biodiversity gain. The following recommendations for landscape planting proposed by the ecologist have been taken into account:
- *‘It is recommended that the landscape planting, including the proposed hedgerow within the site is composed from native species and species known to be of value for the attraction of wildlife.*
 - *To enhance the biodiversity value of the site, it is recommended that the ornamental hedgerow is replaced with a species-rich native hedgerow of the same length.*
 - *The understorey and ground cover planting design should be prepared to optimise the attraction of invertebrates such as feeding bumblebees and butterflies. Where possible the use of native species should be maximised but where necessary non-native species known to be attractive to invertebrates should be used.*
 - *Planting schemes that include flowering species such as Viburnum, Ceanothus, Hebe, Lavandula, Lonicera, Potentilla, Rosmarinus and Vinca can maximise opportunities for feeding invertebrates and for the attraction of foraging bats and birds’*
- 6.12. A landscape buffer is included along the southern and western boundaries where the site interfaces with the Green Belt. This landscape buffer encompasses the retained, mature trees around the boundaries which are protected by TPO. Planting of individual shade tolerant native trees within the tree belt and additional tree planting within rear gardens would compensate for the loss of the trees which are unsuitable for retention. The planting of trees within the buffer, as well as native understory planting, would strengthen the buffer and enhance its screening capacity. A native hedgerow is proposed around the extents of the tree belt to provide further low-level visual screening.
- 6.13. Native hedgerow planting (*Carpinus betulus*) is used to define the garden boundaries and around the frontages with the access road. Native trees and flowering shrub species are proposed within front gardens. This would increase the biodiversity within the site, would be visually appealing and would be in keeping with the character of the landscape setting.

7. Landscape effects

- 7.1. As set out in **Diagram 1** of the methodology, the significance of effect is a combined judgement of the sensitivity and the magnitude of change.
- 7.2. The sensitivity is a combined judgement of the value and the susceptibility and has been set out in **Table 4**, section 4 above.

Magnitude of effect

- 7.3. The magnitude of effect is a combined judgement of geographic extent, duration and the size/scale of effect. The magnitude of effect for the landscape receptors is explained below.

Geographical extent of effects

- 7.4. All effects on landscape receptors would be experienced at site level and within the local area.

Duration of effects

- 7.5. Upon completion, the effects on all landscape receptors would be medium term and temporary, whilst landscape proposals mature.
- 7.6. Upon maturity of proposed planting, the effects on all landscape receptors would be long term and permanent.

Size and scale of effect on the Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b) within the study area

- 7.7. Within the study area, the landscape character area includes Ainsworth and pockets of settlement, as well as urbanising features and edge of settlement land uses. The site comprises part of the former nursing home which includes existing built form of both large and small scale. The site therefore lies within parts of the landscape character area which have an edge of settlement character and the site is well associated with existing built form.
- 7.8. The entire former nursing home site is well enclosed by existing tree belts which limits the visibility of the existing buildings within the site in views from the wider landscape. Peripheral plantations within the lower areas of the landscape character area, near to the settlement edge, are a recognised characteristic and therefore do not appear out of place within the landscape.
- 7.9. The site is small, low-lying, well contained, and discreet in the landscape. It is closely associated with the former nursing home, the buildings of which are partially visible from the settlement edge but are well screened in longer distance views from the higher land to the north. In any case, these longer distance views include the settlement of Ainsworth, and any filtered views of buildings are seen in this context.

- 7.10. The scale of the development is small and is appropriate to the scale of the landscape. The design and materials proposed for the dwellings aligns with the existing buildings within the former nursing home site and is in keeping with the local vernacular.
- 7.11. There is opportunity to manage the existing trees within the site and introduce new trees, understory planting and hedgerow to reinforce the existing landscape character. This would enhance the appearance of the landscape as well as providing ecological interest, habitat connectivity and biodiversity gain.
- 7.12. There would be no disturbance to the wider landscape character area and the proposals would not conflict with the West Pennine Moors designation (Policy OL7/2). Consideration has been given to the siting and design of the buildings to ensure that they are sympathetic to their surroundings and not obtrusive. Native planting, appropriate to the setting is included. The proposals would not conflict with the Special Landscape Area designation (Policy EN9/1). There would be no effects on the Ainsworth Conservation Area or the setting of PRoWs in the vicinity. The effects on the Green Belt are discussed within section 9.
- 7.13. The size and scale of effect on the Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b) within the study area upon completion as a result of the proposals would be **negligible**.
- 7.14. Taking into account the maturity of the proposed landscape, the size and scale of effect on the Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b) within the study area at year 15 would be **negligible**.
- Size and scale of effect on the landscape character within the site and immediate locality**
- 7.15. The proposed dwellings are well associated with existing built form within the former nursing home. Local materials and styles are incorporated, and the buildings assimilate well into their setting in terms of siting, scale and design.
- 7.16. The site is well screened by existing boundary trees which enclose the entire former nursing home site. The proposals include the management of the existing trees and native planting which would reinforce the landscape buffers around the boundaries of the site. Proposed planting would be entirely appropriate to the setting, would enhance the visual appearance of the local area and provide ecological benefits.
- 7.17. In views from the PRoWs which track through the farmland in the immediate vicinity of the site the existing boundary trees filter views of the existing nursing home buildings. There is a perception that the site is already developed, due to the close proximity of the existing former nursing home buildings. Strengthening the tree belts with further planting would be beneficial in the longer term. In views from the PRoWs which lie within the wider and more elevated landscape to the north of the site the existing built form within the site is barely perceptible. The proposals would be in keeping with the existing character of the locality with little or no perceptible change.

- 7.18. The size and scale of effect on the landscape character within the immediate locality upon completion as a result of the proposals would be **negligible**.
- 7.19. The size and scale of effect on the landscape character within the immediate locality upon maturity of the proposals would be **low beneficial-negligible**.

Size and scale of effect on the landscape features within the site

- 7.20. The tree survey indicates that only trees which have ash dieback, are diseased or which cannot be retained for arboricultural reasons would be removed. The hedgerow along the northern boundary would be removed and replaced with a native species hedgerow to enhance biodiversity. There would be the loss of some amenity grassland in areas of proposed hard standing and within the proposed building footprint.
- 7.21. Through the implementation of a native landscape scheme, it is considered that any losses of grassland or trees across the site would be fully compensated for. The boundary tree belts would be strengthened with new tree planting and hedgerows. The proposals would enhance the ecological interest and provide an appropriate setting for the built form to help assimilate it into the surrounding landscape.
- 7.22. Upon completion the size and scale of effect on the landscape features would be **low beneficial-negligible** taking into account the balance of the minor loss of vegetation with the benefits of the proposed planting.
- 7.23. Upon maturity of the proposals, taking into account effective management of the proposed landscape, the size and scale of effect on the landscape features would be **low beneficial**.

Table 6: Summary of magnitude on landscape receptors

Receptor	Magnitude upon completion	Magnitude upon maturity of landscape
Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
Landscape character within the site and immediate locality	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Low beneficial-negligible Local/long term/permanent
Landscape features within the site	Low beneficial-negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Low beneficial Local/long term/permanent

Landscape effects

- 7.24. **Table 7** below provides a summary of the landscape effects upon completion and 15 years post completion when the proposed landscape has matured. This post completion assessment represents the residual effects.
- 7.25. The assessment of significance of landscape effects is based on the sensitivity of the landscape receptor (Table 4) and the magnitude of effect (Table 6).

Table 7: Summary of effects on landscape receptors

Receptor	Sensitivity (Table 4)	Magnitude (Table 6)	Resulting effect
Upon completion			
Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)	Medium-low	Negligible	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary
Landscape character within the site and immediate locality	Medium-low	Negligible	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary
Landscape features within the site	Medium-low	Low beneficial- negligible	Minor beneficial-negligible Local/medium term/temporary
Upon maturity (residual effect)			
Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b)	Medium-low	Negligible	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
Landscape character within the site and immediate locality	Medium-low	Low beneficial- negligible	Minor beneficial-negligible Local/long term/permanent
Landscape features within the site	Medium-low	Low beneficial	Minor beneficial Local/long term/permanent

8. Visual effects

- 8.1. As set out in **Diagram 2** of the methodology, the significance of effect on visual receptors is a combined judgement of the sensitivity and the magnitude of change.
- 8.2. The visual sensitivity is a combined judgement of the value and the susceptibility and has been set out in **Table 5**, section 5 above.

Magnitude of effect

- 8.3. The magnitude of effect is a combined judgement of geographic extent, duration and the size/scale of effect. The magnitude of effect for the visual receptors is explained below.

Geographical extent of effects

- 8.4. All effects on landscape receptors would be experienced at site level and within the local area.

Duration of effects

- 8.5. Upon completion, the effects on all visual receptors would be medium term and temporary, whilst landscape proposals mature.
- 8.6. Upon maturity of proposed planting, the effects on all visual receptors would be long term and permanent.

1. Size and scale of change to views from PRoW 29CC to the south-east (Photograph 1)

- 8.7. Views are partially enclosed by an existing hedgerow running along the western side of the route. Where there are gaps in the hedgerow there would be a fleeting and glimpsed view in a north-westerly direction towards the site which is around 650m away. The existing boundary trees filter views of the existing buildings within the former nursing home and the site. The proposed dwellings would sit behind the recently extended 2 storey house which is partially visible. The proposed built form would largely be screened by the existing property and trees. Any views of the rooflines of the proposed buildings would be heavily filtered by the tree canopy and would sit behind existing built form resulting in imperceptible changes to the views.
- 8.8. Upon completion the proposed dwellings would largely be screened by intervening built form and vegetation. The size and scale of the change to views from PRoW 29CC upon completion would be **negligible**.
- 8.9. Upon maturity of the proposed landscape any filtered views of the proposed dwellings would be screened. The size and scale of change to views from PRoW 29CC upon maturity of planting would be **negligible**.

2. Existing views from PRow 42CC/access road to the former nursing home to the south (Photograph 2)

- 8.10. PRow 42CC is well enclosed by hedgerows on both sides and the woodland plantation to the west. Looking north there are channeled views down the road with the white rendered cottages at the end, a noticeable feature. The proposed dwellings, at approximately 250m away, would be barely perceptible from this section of the PRow. At the intersection of the PRow and the access road to the nursing home, there is a view across fields with the former nursing home buildings partially visible behind the boundary vegetation. The proposed dwellings would similarly be partially visible, filtered by the existing trees and seen at some distance in the context of adjacent built form.
- 8.11. Upon completion the size and scale of effects on views from most of the route of PRow 42CC would be **negligible**. At the intersection with the access road to the former nursing home there would be **low adverse** effects on views.
- 8.12. Upon maturity of the proposed landscape the size and scale of effects on views from most of the route of PRow 42CC would be **negligible**. At the intersection with the access road to the former nursing home there would be **low adverse-negligible** effects on views as the existing and proposed trees and hedgerows would provide substantial screening.

3. Existing views from PRow 32CC to the south and west (Photographs 3.1 and 3.2)

- 8.13. PRow 32CC runs from the access road to the former nursing home in a westerly direction before tracking northwards towards Barrack Fold Farm. The route is between 200-250m away from the site. There are views across the intervening fields with trees partially screening the existing buildings within the former nursing home. Views of the proposed dwellings would be filtered by the boundary trees and seen in the context of existing buildings. In views from the section of the route which lies directly to the west of the site, the proposed dwellings would be substantially screened.
- 8.14. Upon completion the size and scale of the change to views from PRow 32CC would be **low adverse-negligible**.
- 8.15. Upon maturity of the landscape proposals the size and scale of change to views from PRow 32CC would be **negligible** given that the trees would provide substantial screening.

4. Existing views from PRow 35CC to the immediate north (Photograph 4)

- 8.16. PRow 35CC runs in an east-west direction around 150m to the north of the site. It runs through a field and there are open views looking south. Views of the buildings within the former nursing home are filtered by the boundary trees and the Gate House building within the site is not visible. The proposed dwellings would be substantially screened by the existing vegetation located along the western part of the northern boundary and any views of built form would be seen in the context of existing buildings.
- 8.17. Upon completion the size and scale of the change to views from PRow 35CC would be **low adverse-negligible**.

- 8.18. Upon maturity of the size and scale of change to views from PRoW 35CC would be **low adverse-negligible**.

5. Existing views from PRoW 34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road to the north (Photograph 5)

- 8.19. PRoW 34CC runs from Barrack Fold Farm northwards to Old Holts. The topography is undulating, and Barrack Fold Farm sits on a minor ridgeline with the ground levels falling to the immediate north of the farm. The landform and intervening built form mean that the proposals would not be visible from the southern sections of this route. The route passes the golf course, and the ground levels then begin to rise. From the northern sections of this route there are wide panoramic views looking south, east and west. Similar views are possible from PRoW 47CC which follows Bentley Hall Road, 870m to the north of the site. Looking south, Barrack Hall Farm and the woodland plantation on the outskirts of Ainsworth are noticeable features. The trees which surround the former nursing home are visible as a minor element in a wide view and substantially screen the existing buildings. The proposed dwellings would be indistinguishable.
- 8.20. Upon completion the size and scale of the change to views from PRoW/34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road would be **negligible**.
- 8.21. Upon maturity of the size and scale of change to views from PRoW/34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road would be **negligible**.

6. Existing views from PRoW 137BUR to the north of the reservoirs (Photographs 6.1 and 6.2)

- 8.22. PRoW 137BUR links southwards from Bentley Hall Road towards the reservoirs. The route is between 830m and 450m away from the site. In views from the northern parts of the route, the trees within the former nursing home are a small element in a wide view and substantially screen the existing buildings. The proposed dwellings would be similarly screened by the existing trees. In views from the lower lying, southern parts of the route the roll in the landform means that only the tops of the trees within the former nursing home site are visible and the existing buildings are screened. From this part of the route the proposed dwellings would be indistinguishable.
- 8.23. Upon completion the size and scale of the change to views from PRoW137BUR would be **negligible**.
- 8.24. Upon maturity of the size and scale of change to views from PRoW 137BURB would be **negligible**.

7. Existing views from PRoW 31CC to the north-east and east (viewpoints 7.1 and 7.2)

- 8.25. PRoW 31CC runs from the reservoirs southwards towards Ainsworth. It is located approximately 370m away at its furthest point and around 150m away as it passes the former nursing home. In views from the section of the route which lies immediately to the south of the reservoirs, the trees within the former nursing home substantially screen any existing built form and would similarly screen the proposed dwellings. The route passes to

the east of the site and intervening trees and built form would obscure any views of the proposals. In views from the section of the route which lies to the south-east of the site, the extended former bungalow is partially visible. The proposed dwellings would sit behind this building in this view and would largely be screened, although there may be filtered views of roof lines.

- 8.26. Upon completion the size and scale of the change to views from PRoW 31CC would be **low adverse-negligible**.
- 8.27. Upon maturity of the proposed landscape any filtered views of the proposed dwellings would be screened and the size and scale of change to views from PRoW 31CC would be **negligible**.

Table 8: Summary of magnitude of effects on visual receptors

Receptor	Magnitude upon completion	Magnitude upon maturity of landscape
1. Users of PRoW 29CC to the south-east	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
2. Users of PRoW 42CC/access road to the former nursing home to the south	Negligible or Low adverse Local/medium term/temporary	Negligible or Low adverse-negligible Local/long term/permanent
3. Users of PRoW 32CC to the south and west	Low adverse-negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
4. Users of PRoW 35CC to the immediate north	Low adverse-negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Low adverse-negligible Local/long term/permanent
5. Users of PRoW 34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road to the distant north	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
6. Users of PRoW 137BUR to the north of the reservoirs	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
7. Users of PRoW 31CC to the north-east and east	Low adverse-negligible Local/medium term/temporary	Negligible Local/long term/permanent

Significance of visual effects

- 8.28. **Table 9** below provides a summary of the visual effects upon completion and 15 years post completion when the proposed landscape has matured. This post completion assessment represents the residual effects.
- 8.29. The assessment of significance of visual effects is based on the sensitivity of the visual receptors (Table 5) and the magnitude of effect (Table 8).

Table 9: Summary of visual effects

Visual Receptor Type	Sensitivity (Table 5)	Magnitude (Table 8)	Resulting Significance of Effect
Upon completion			
1. Users of PRoW 29CC to the south-east	High-medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary
2. Users of PRoW 42CC/access road to the former nursing home to the south	High-medium	Negligible or low adverse	Negligible or minor adverse Local/medium term/temporary
3. Users of PRoW 32CC to the south and west	High-medium	Low adverse-negligible	Minor adverse-negligible Local/medium term/temporary
4. Users of PRoW 35CC to the immediate north	High-medium	Low adverse-negligible.	Minor adverse-negligible Local/medium term/temporary
5. Users of PRoW 34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road to the distant north	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary
6. Users of PRoW 137BUR to the north of the reservoirs	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/medium term/temporary
7. Users of PRoW 31CC to the north-east and east	High-medium	Low adverse-negligible	Minor adverse-negligible Local/medium term/temporary
Upon maturity (residual effect)			
1. Users of PRoW 29CC to the south-east	High-medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
2. Users of PRoW 42CC/access road to the former nursing home to the south	High-medium	Negligible or Low adverse-negligible	Negligible or minor adverse-negligible Local/long term/permanent
3. Users of PRoW 32CC to the south and west	High-medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
4. Users of PRoW 35CC to the immediate north	High-medium	Low adverse-negligible.	Minor adverse-negligible Local/long term/permanent
5. Users of PRoW 34CC/47CC/Bentley Hall Road to the distant north	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
6. Users of PRoW 137BUR to the north of the reservoirs	Medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/long term/permanent
7. Users of PRoW 31CC to the north-east and east	High-medium	Negligible	Negligible Local/long term/permanent

9. Effects on Green Belt

- 9.1. This section provides an appraisal of the contribution of the site to the Green Belt. It explores the effects of the development on the visual openness of the Green Belt, including impacts on long distance views and visual links to the wider Green Belt as well as touching on the development's perceived encroachment into the Green Belt.

Effects on the perceived openness of the Green Belt

Effects on views from the settlement edge to the wider landscape

- 9.2. There are numerous PRoWs linking northwards from Ainsworth however, there are very few locations close to the edge of the settlement from which the wider nursing home site is visible. This is largely due to the level of enclosure provided by existing buildings and vegetation.
- 9.3. In views from the PRoWs which lie within the immediate vicinity of the site, the existing, mature boundary tree belts filter views of the former nursing home buildings. The extended bungalow and taller administration block are partially visible resulting in an urban edge character. As such, when walking on the PRoWs within the vicinity of the site, the experience is one of being on the edge of settlement rather than a wholly rural context.
- 9.4. The site is perceived as part of the former nursing home due to its close association with the existing buildings and because of the block of woodland which envelops the wider site. There is a clear distinction between the former nursing home site, which includes the application site, and the surrounding countryside. The site therefore makes no contribution to a sense of openness when viewed from the PRoWs close to the settlement edge.
- 9.5. The scale of the proposed development is small, and the buildings would assimilate well into their setting in terms of siting, scale and design. The proposals include the management of the existing boundary trees and native tree and hedgerow planting which would reinforce the landscape buffers around the boundaries of the site. This planting would be entirely appropriate to the setting, and in time, would strengthen the existing screening. The proposals would be in keeping with their surroundings, with negligible change to the character or appearance of the area. In views from the settlement, there would be no effect on the perceived openness of the Green Belt as a result of the proposals.

Effects on long distance views

- 9.6. There are views southwards, from the PRoWs which lie within the wider and more elevated landscape to the north of the site. These views are long and panoramic, taking in the wider agricultural land with the settlement of Ainsworth in the distance. Barrack Hall Farm and the woodland plantation on the outskirts of Ainsworth are noticeable features. The trees within the former nursing home area are visible as a minor element in a wide view, substantially

screening the former nursing home buildings. The site is enclosed by this block of woodland and therefore does not contribute to a sense of openness in views from the wider landscape to the north.

- 9.7. The proposed dwellings would sit within the existing woodland and would be barely perceptible or completely screened in views from the wider landscape. In any case, these longer distance views include the settlement of Ainsworth, and any filtered views of the buildings would be seen in this context. Development within the site would not interrupt longer views and any visual links would be unaffected. The proposals would have a negligible effect upon the openness of the long views from the PRoW located within the wider landscape to the north.

Effects on the perceived encroachment into the Green Belt

- 9.8. The site is closely associated with the former nursing home and is surrounded by woodland. Its character is distinct from the countryside which surrounds it. The proposals would be confined within the extents of the former nursing home site and would be well screened by the existing and proposed boundary vegetation. The development would not encroach into the surrounding countryside and the function and purpose of the Green Belt would remain.

10. Conclusions

- 10.1. This report identifies and assesses the anticipated effects on the character and features of the landscape and on people's views and visual amenity, as a result of the proposed development on land at the former nursing home, Ainsworth.

Planning policy

- 10.2. The site would not meet the criteria of 'Valued Landscape' in terms of NPPF.
- 10.3. The site lies within the West Pennine Moors (Policy OL7/2) where the LPA control development and manage recreational activity and public access, so as to reduce any possible detrimental effects these may have on the important character of the area. There would be no disturbance to the wider landscape character area and the proposals would therefore not conflict with the West Pennine Moors designation.
- 10.4. The site lies within an area designated as Special Landscape Area designation (Policy EN9/1). Consideration has been given to the siting and design of the buildings to ensure that they are sympathetic to their surroundings and not obtrusive. Native planting, appropriate to the setting is included. As such the proposals would not conflict with the Special Landscape Area designation.
- 10.5. There would be no effects on the Ainsworth Conservation Area or upon the setting of PRoWs in the vicinity.
- 10.6. The site is within Green Belt but is closely associated with the existing development at the former nursing home. It does not contribute to the sense of openness in views from PRoWs within the immediate vicinity of Ainsworth or from longer distance public viewpoints located to the north. The proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt and would not encroach into the countryside which surround the former care home site.

Landscape effects

- 10.7. Residual effects on the Landscape Character Area 54/3 West Pennine Foothills (3a and 3b) would be **negligible, local, long term** and **permanent**.
- 10.8. There would be **minor beneficial-negligible, local, long term, permanent residual effects** on the landscape character within the site and immediate locality upon maturity of the proposals.
- 10.9. There would be **minor beneficial, local, long term, permanent residual effects on the landscape features within the site** due to the planting of significant numbers of trees and management of the landscape.

10.10. Landscape effects would be confined to the site itself and the immediate local area.

Visual effects

10.11. The site is enclosed by well-established trees and associated with the buildings at the former nursing home.

10.12. Views of the proposed development would be experienced from PRoWs on the outskirts of Ainsworth. The proposed dwellings would be substantially screened in views from the PRoWs by existing and proposed planting and any filtered views would be seen in the context of existing built form. Residual effects on the views from PRoWs in the immediate vicinity of the site would be **minor adverse-negligible or negligible, long-term** and **permanent**.

10.13. Residual effects on views from the PRoWs which lie within the wider landscape to the north of the site would be **negligible, long term** and **permanent** given that the proposals would be imperceptible.

Conclusion

10.14. The LVA is based on the detailed design. Provided that the landscape proposals meet the required standards and are maintained and managed in accordance with an agreed management plan, there would be no landscape or visual reason why the proposals would not be acceptable.

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