



United Utilities

WOODGATE HILL

Landscape and Visual Technical Note





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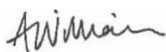
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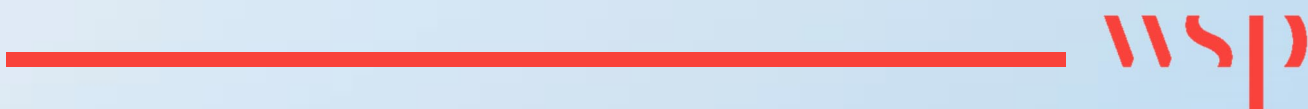
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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL



LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL

INTRODUCTION

The following Technical Note has been written on behalf of the Applicant, United Utilities, in relation to proposed new chemical buildings within the operational boundary of Woodgate Hill Water Treatment Works (WTW) hereafter referred to as the Proposed Development. At present, the Technical Note is restricted to those elements not deemed to fall within permitted development rights and thus is limited to effects attributed to the operational phase of the works only. All impacts relating to the construction phase of the works are deemed temporary in nature and under PART 4 Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (GPDO) are considered as permitted development and thus are not considered.

A desk-based assessment and site walk over have been carried out and the purpose of this Technical Note is to provide a short summary outlining the findings and potential impact upon the existing landscape character and visual amenity, which will inform recommendations for mitigation.

SCOPE OF WORK

The Technical Note identifies, describes and interprets the character and quality of the existing landscape and presents an understanding of the visual amenity of the area by which to assess the Proposed Development.

Landscape character and visual amenity are closely related but distinct aspects in their own right.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The character of the landscape derives from a combination of physical factors, natural processes and human intervention. Landscape effects are a combination of the physical changes to the fabric of the landscape arising from the Proposed Development and perceptual changes – the way these physical changes alter how the landscape is perceived.

The landscape assessment considers the effect of the Proposed Development on the landscape as a whole, effects on significant individual elements of the landscape, and effects on characteristic combinations or patterns of elements and how these are seen perceived to affect its character and quality.

VISUAL AMENITY

Visual effects arise from changes in the composition and character of views available in the area affected. The assessment considers the likely change that would be experienced, including the effects both on specific views and on general visual amenity – the pleasantness of the view or outlook – that the people affected enjoy.

For the purposes of assessment, visual receptors are described as those people living, working, passing through or enjoying recreational activities in the area.

For the purpose of the technical note the Site is defined as the extent of the Planning Application boundary, while the study area relates to the area of land 500m beyond the site extents.

In determining the baseline conditions by which to inform mitigation and to determine the potential for a significant effect, the following key tasks have been undertaken:

- A brief summary of landscape and visual baseline conditions of the Site and its surroundings; including:
 - A brief review of the relevant landscape planning policy context for the area;
 - A desk-based review of landscape designations; up to 500m from the Site extents, referred to as the Study Area;
 - A brief review of published third party Landscape Character Assessments; and
 - the findings of a site walkover conducted on the 25th of May 2022.
- A brief description of potential mitigation and enhancement measures, associated with the Proposed Development to reduce potential effects; and
- Conclusions to determine the potential for a significant effect to arise.

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL AMENITY BASELINE

LEGISLATION

European Landscape Conservation

The UK is a signatory to the European Landscape Convention (ELC) which was ratified in 2006 and became binding in the UK from 1 March 2007. The ELC requires “landscape to be integrated into regional and town planning policies and in cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as any other policies with possible direct or indirect impacts on landscape”. It also acknowledges that all landscapes can be important, whether or not they are designated.

There is no legislation specifically covering landscape character or visual amenity but the spirit of the ELC is carried through in planning policy and government guidance.

Within the ELC, landscape is defined as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and / or human factors.” Furthermore, it recognises that all landscapes are potentially important, irrespective of location or condition – signatories acknowledge” that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded area as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas”.

Planning Policy

National

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. There is an overarching presumption in favour of sustainable development, and it states: “the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve.”

The following policies as outlined within Table 1 below are considered relevant to the Proposed Development.

Table 1 – Policy Review

Policy	Significance of impact of the Proposed Development on policy objectives
(Para 20) - Strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, and make sufficient provision for: d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure, and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.	The Site is located within the authority boundary of Bury District Council. For the purpose of this assessment the following documents have been reviewed: Bury Council – Landscape Character Assessment, 2009¹
(Para 137 – 151) – Protecting Green Belt Land The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land. A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. – exemptions apply. Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These include (b) engineering operations	The Site is located within an area of Green Belt referred to as “Liverpool, Manchester and West Yorkshire Green Belt”. The Proposed Development is not considered to affect the perceived openness of the area, due to being installed immediately adjacent to existing infrastructure, recognised as a defining feature of the existing landscape and neighbouring properties.
(Para 174). Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, Sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan); b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the	The Proposed Development is not considered to significantly affect the character of the landscape due to it being located adjacent to existing infrastructure, some elements of which are detracting features within the immediate landscape and which influence landscape quality at a local level. The proposed landscape strategy to accompany the planning application will seek, where necessary and

¹ Bury Council Landscape Character Assessment, 2009, available at <https://www.bury.gov.uk/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=17537&p=0>

economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans.	practicable, to enhance the existing value of the Site through mitigation planting that is in keeping with the surrounding area, whilst strengthening linear green links / wildlife corridors and providing additional visual screening. The principal of 'no net loss of biodiversity' will be adopted where possible within the confines of the planning application – at this time, off-site planting measures will not be considered.
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LOCAL

The Site is located within the Greater Manchester area and more specifically within the Bury district. The following policies are relevant to the Proposed Development:

Bury Local Plan – Policy Directions (2018) - emerging

- Policy OS3 Recreation Routes – aims to safeguard recreational routes
- Policy NE1 Green Infrastructure – seeks to maintain the role and function of the green infrastructure network
- Policy NE2 Biodiversity – proposals should minimise impacts to biodiversity assets and provide net gains where possible
- Policy NE6 Landscape Character – aims to protect, conserve and improve the quality of landscape
- Policy GB1 Development in the Green Belt – provides guidance for development in the Green Belt

Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1997) - current

- Policy OL1 Green Belt – development should respond to Green Belt purposes
- Policy EN1 - Built environment – seeks to enhance character, appearance and visual amenity with further information set out in a series of sub policies
- Policy EN8 – Woodland and trees – encourages the retention of tree planting, natural regeneration and replacement planting
- EN9 – Landscape seeks to protect and enhance the local landscape with sub policy EN9/1 Special Landscape Areas
- EN10 – Environmental Improvement -seeks to improve environmental quality

THE SITE AND STUDY AREA

The Proposed Development is located centrally within the United Utilities owned site, to the west of the reservoir. The topography associated with the Site occupies an elevated, shallowly descending hill slope south-west of Woodgate Hill. The covered reservoirs form visible features, with grassed embankment slopes along their south-western margins.

The Site within an area identified as a Special Landscape Area, within the current UDP. Planning Policy EN9/1 notes that *“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”*.

The Site is predominantly a combination of managed and rough/scrubby grassland, with scattered scrub and remnants of hedgerows. There are no trees directly associated with the site itself. However, the land owned by United Utilities is associated with the site and reservoir itself, extending to the housing to the west and to the south.

Within the surrounding landscape, the dominant land use to the north and east is undulating pasture farmland, interspersed with isolated scattered residential properties linked by minor roads and access tracks. Scattered groups of woodland blocks are discernible, immediately to the north-east of the reservoir, and to the west of the Site, associated with the adjacent cemetery and Finchy Park, in addition to being located along field boundaries. Along the access road (Woodgate Hill Road) leading into the Site, a number of individual trees, located close to the junction with the B6222 (Rochdale Old Road), have been identified as having Tree Protection Orders (TPO's) associated with them.

To the south and west, the adjoining land is densely populated with residential properties on the urban fringe of Bury, with the nearby road corridors of the M66 Motorway to the west and B6222 Rochdale Old Road to the south.

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Site and Study Area are located within Natural England's National Character Area, No.54 Manchester Pennine Fringe².

At a local level, the landscape character is described within the Bury Landscape Character Assessment 2009³ and defined as landscape character area (LCA) 36/2 Moorland Fringe. There is a transitional landscape between the exposed moorland hills of the South Pennines and the Manchester Fringe Landscapes in the valley below. The Study Area also includes LCA 54/4 Parkland Estate, located immediately to the west of the M66 road corridor.

VISUAL AMENITY

The Site is partially visible to occupiers of properties situated immediately south-east and south-west, views are also available to users of Finchy Park and Holebottom Cemetery. Views from these locations are filtered by mature boundary vegetation and partially obscured by landform. Where discernible in views from residential properties, views of the Site are restricted to views from first floor windows only, the assumption being that these are associated with the outlook from

² Natural England's National Landscape Character Area No.54, 17th Jan 2013 – available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/4631438?category=587130>

³ Landscape Character (bury.gov.uk)

bedroom/bathroom windows rather than the main living spaces on the ground floor which are typically regarded as being sensitive to the outlook.

Views from properties on Sixth Avenue are open towards the United Utilities owned site, with middle-distance ground floor views towards the Site.

To the north and north-east, views towards the Site from isolated and elevated properties along Castle Hill Road are screened by topography and intervening vegetation. To the north, occupiers of residential properties at Gorsey Fold are heavily screened by belts of existing woodland south of Gipsy Brook, while occupiers of Riddings Farm have acute views towards the Site, partially filtered by vegetation bordering the property.

The sensitivity of residential and recreational receptors would typically be considered High.

Where discernible within views, the Proposed Development would introduce an additional built form within the local landscape setting. It would be considered to have a limited magnitude of change on the nature of existing views, due to the presence of the existing infrastructure and isolated buildings of a similar nature and scale, already associated within the area.

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

The landscape strategy produced in support of the planning application will:

- Screen planting in the form of a combination of a scrub and shrubs, along the western and southern perimeter of the Site, strengthening links to the surrounding habitats, creating better wildlife corridors and green links, while screening views of the Proposed Development from those receptors considered to be most significantly affected;
- Planting will be protected by suitable stock proof fencing; and
- As identified in the Planning, Design and Access Statement (70093956_PDAS1) the finish of the building will be powder coated in colour Green RAL 6002, in order to reduce its visual prominence within views from nearby receptors, the surrounding security fence will be dark green.

CONCLUSIONS

LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The Proposed Development is unlikely to affect the quality and value of the local landscape, due to it being associated with an existing water treatment site with comparable buildings, within the landscape that already contributes to the local character of the area. The new buildings will be perceived within the context of similar built form therefore reducing the likely magnitude of change. In addition, the Proposed Development will result in a relatively small-scale change to the character of the landscape when compared to the scale of the landscape character area as a whole, reducing the magnitude of change further. Combined the impacts are considered to result in a negligible change to landscape character and would be unlikely to result in a significant effect on the perception of landscape and associated Special Landscape Area (Policy EN9/1).

Figure 1 - View from Sixth Avenue looking north west



VISUAL AMENITY

Those sensitive visual receptors considered most likely to be potentially affected by the Proposed Development are identified below and grouped according to the broad orientation of views:

Views from the west

- Occupants of residential properties along Goldfinch Drive and Chaffinch Drive; and
- Recreational users of Finchy Park;

Views comprise a rising landform to the east, with the noticeably linear landform associated with the edge of the reservoir in the middle distance. Isolated trees in the near and middle distance and associated with Riddings Farm results in sparse vegetation. This becomes more pronounced on the distant horizon with a linear belt of trees, associated with the northern edge of the reservoir.

Views would not be substantially modified by the Proposed Development. The roofline of the new buildings would be visible in the middle distance but would not form a new prominent feature and would be in keeping in nature and scale as other buildings associated with the UU site and of Riddings Farm to the north-east. Mitigation would soften the appearance over time, and once established would substantially screen the majority of the built form and be perceived alongside the isolated trees in the middle distance. The Proposed Development is therefore not predicted to give rise to a significant effect.

Views from the south

- Occupants of residential properties along Meadowbrook Close and Woodgate Hill Road; and
- Residents of Bury Hospice.
- Users of Public Right of Way Ref: 49BUR, 48BUR and 51BUR;

- Recreational users of the pavilion and open space between Woodgate Road and Fourth Avenue; and
- Visitors to Hole Bottom Cemetery.

Views from the rear of residential property vary in orientation, however where views existing to the north and north-east they typically comprise the westerly facing slope and terrace that incorporates the covered reservoir and several brick buildings and security fences associated with the UU site. The rising landform to the east comprises a number of fields and remanent hawthorns from former field boundaries rising to the flat outline of the reservoir and a local highpoint beyond. The Proposed Development will be visible in the middle distance of views and be perceived within the context of existing buildings associated with the UU site and Riddings Farm to the north. Views for some will be screened in part or entirely by the intervening landform, such that only the roofline may remain visible. Upon establishment, mitigation planting to the west of the building will, on a rising landform, substantially screen remaining views. The Proposed Development is therefore not predicted to give rise to a significant effect.

Figure 2 - View north from lane off Woodgate Hill Road



Views from the south-east

- Occupants of residential properties along Fourth Avenue and Sixth Avenue.

Views from the rear of residential property are typically orientated north and comprise the westerly facing slope and terrace that incorporates the covered reservoir and several brick buildings and

security fences associated with the UU site. Vegetation along the fringes of development and in the foreground of views intermittently screens longer distance views. Beyond the UU site in the middle distance, mature trees combine with remanet hedgerow to limit views and form the skyline. Riddings Farm is visible in the far distance. Where more open views exist, there are very long-distance views to the north-west across Bury to the West Pennines.

The Proposed Development will be visible in the middle-distance beyond the security fences and existing buildings in the near distance. The roofline of the building would be visible above the intervening landform, and as proposed mitigation planting establishes would become increasingly less visible. The Proposed Development is therefore not predicted to give rise to a significant effect.

Figure 3 - View north from Fourth Avenue



Views from the east and north-east

- Residents of Castle Hill Road; and
- Road users travelling along Castle Hill Road.

Views from elevated locations are afforded long distance views over Bury and the West Pennines. A combination of the tier of the landform associated with the covered reservoir and planting along its north eastern boundary effectively screens views on the lower slope of the landform.

The Proposed Development will be screened from views from higher ground to the east and north east by a combination of existing landform and planting. The Proposed Development is therefore not predicted to give rise to a significant effect.

Figure 4 - View south-west from Castlehill Road



Views from the north

- Occupants of nearby residential properties at Riddings Farm to the north; and
- Visitors and workers associated with the UU site offices and external spaces.

Views south and south-east comprise the westerly facing slope and terrace that incorporates the covered reservoir and several brick buildings and security fences associated with the UU site. Beyond the UU site, residential property along Chaffinch Drive, Woodgate Hill Road and Fourth Avenue is visible.

The Proposed Development would be visible in the middle distance of views to the south, perceived within the context of the outline of the reservoir, UU site buildings in the distance beyond and residential property in the far-distance. Upon establishment, the mitigation planting would tie the building form into the landscape, reducing its visual prominence. The Proposed Development is therefore not predicted to give rise to a significant effect.

Receptors scoped out of the appraisal

The following receptors are scoped out, due to being screened from view or are considered as having a lower sensitivity, and thus result in a negligible effect:

Residents

- Occupants of nearby residential properties along Kelwood Avenue and Castle Hill Road – not anticipated to experience views of the Proposed Scheme as views are heavily filtered by the intervening woodland belts and local landform; and
- Occupants of Mawkin Farm – not anticipated to experience views of the Proposed Scheme as views are largely obscured by local landform.

Recreational users

- Users of Public Right of Way Ref: 43BUR#1, Hey Bp48. Hey Bp92, Hey Fp93 and Hey Bp46– not anticipated to experience views of the Proposed Scheme as views are heavily filtered by the intervening woodland belts and local landform

SUMMARY

The Proposed Development is not predicted to give rise to a significant effect on landscape character. The existing landform associated with the reservoirs and built form within the UU site are existing features of the landscape within which a new building of similar form and scale would not substantially change the perception of the landscape.

Where views of the new buildings would arise from nearby visual receptors the effects are not predicted to be significant. Views from the south-west, south and south-east comprise the existing landform associated with the covered reservoir and buildings within the UU site. The Proposed Development, in association with mitigation planting proposed, will not be perceived as a new and substantive change to the outlook. The mitigation planting, upon establishment, will reduce awareness of the built form, such that remaining views will not be significantly affected.



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