



Preliminary Landscape & Visual Overview  
**Manchester Road, Rochdale**  
February 2020

12412/R01a/EF/AL



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# 1 Introduction and Site Context

## Background

- 1.1 This technical note has been prepared by Tyler Grange LLP (TG) on behalf of Redrow plc, in response to a desktop analysis and preliminary fieldwork undertaken in May 2019.
- 1.2 The overview provides advice relating to landscape character and visual amenity at a high level to appraise the feasibility of the future residential development of land at Manchester Road, Rochdale (hereafter referred to as 'the site').
- 1.3 This overview report does not constitute a full Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) / full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA). It is intended that this work will inform potential development going forward and provide a review of the suitability of the land for release from the Green Belt.
- 1.4 The report should be read alongside the Landscape and Site Context Plan (12412/P01), Landscape Photoviewpoints (12412/P02), and Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Plan (12412/P03) that are included within this report.

## Site Context

- 1.5 The site location and its surroundings are illustrated on **Plan 1: Landscape and Site Context**.
- 1.6 The site is located at Slattocks eastern settlement urban edge; adjacent to the ribbon development associated with Manchester Road. To the north the site is enclosed by the M62 Motorway, whilst to the south and east it is bound by the A627 (M).
- 1.7 The site area covers approximately 82 hectares comprising numerous pastoral fields. The topography of the site generally rises from east to west.
- 1.8 The site sits approximately 4km from the centre of Rochdale to the north and 5km from Middleton to the south west.
- 1.9 Access to the site is provided from Thornham Lane to the south and Thornham New Road to the north. A number of Public Footpaths traverse the site as seen in **Plan 2: Public Rights of Way and Viewpoint Location Plan**.
- 1.10 The site has been draft allocated in the upcoming Greater Manchester Spatial Framework under policy *Allocation GM2*. Subsequent to this the site would be required to be released from the Green Belt.

Plan 1: Landscape and Site Context (12412\_P01)



## 2 Policy Context

### Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted 2016)

- 2.1 The site lies within the administrative area of Rochdale Borough. The current adopted development plan for the site is the Rochdale Core Strategy (Adopted October 2016). The key policies that are of primary importance in the consideration of landscape and visual matters are set out below:

#### Strategic Objective 3: To improve design, image and quality of place

- 2.2 The strategic objective specifically outlines the need to focus on:

- Raising design quality and promoting sustainable developments;
- Improving gateways into the borough and main transport corridors to improve the image of the borough;
- Protecting and enhancing heritage and natural assets, the special character of our towns, our countryside, open spaces, river valleys and water features; and
- Creating new identity and character where it is lacking (e.g. inner areas and road corridors)

### Policy P2- Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

- 2.3 The council calls for the protection and enhancement of the borough's character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside, and the qualities of its landscapes, utilising the considerable potential of these assets in development and regeneration schemes:

- Requiring new development to integrate successfully with the key natural features of the borough, e.g. river valleys and the Pennine landscape;
- Requiring new development to take opportunities to protect and open up important views of hills and valleys which are part of the borough's unique character;
- Restoring the River Roch and other water bodies to their place as key and attractive features of the borough, including opening up waterways where they have been covered, and enhancing their setting, heritage assets and biodiversity potential;

- Protecting, enhancing and utilising outstanding cultural landscapes, such as the Cheesden Valley area and around Littleborough and Hollingworth Lake; and
- Conserving and enhancing townscape character."

### Policy P3- Improving design of new development

- 2.4 The policy highlights that all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, should adhere to high standards of design. Relevant to landscape character, the following design principles are mentioned:

- Enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general;
- Provide a hierarchy of routes, streets and spaces, relating positively to visual connections between the development and its surroundings"

#### Strategic Object 4: Promoting a greener environment

### Policy G4- Protecting Green Belt

- 2.5 The site currently sits within Green Belt land. This policy states that: "Development will be restricted to those limited types of development which are deemed not to be inappropriate by national planning policies unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. We will encourage the continued operation of major developed sites in the Green Belt and support limited infilling and redevelopment where this maintains beneficial uses and does not harm the Green Belt."

- 2.6 Section 5 of this report provides an assessment of the sites suitability for the release from the Green Belt.

### Policy G6- Enhancing Green Infrastructure

- 2.7 This policy predominantly considers the implementation of high-quality green infrastructure as an important element within development. It summarises that green infrastructure should have regard for landscape character, take opportunities to improve access and natural greenspace, not impede or sever existing greenspace corridors, protect hedgerows and support

new woodland and tree planting.

### Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

- 2.8 Relevant SPDs are set out below:

- Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide SPD (October 2007);
- Public Realm Design Guide SPD (October 2007);
- Residential Design Guide SPD (October 2007);
- Greater Manchester's Green Infrastructure, Next Steps towards a Green Infrastructure Framework (2010);
- Towards a Green Infrastructure Framework for Greater Manchester SPD (September 2008) and
- Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment (July 2016).

- 2.9 The relevant evidence base documents listed above deal with the improvement and enhancement of the existing green infrastructure, to ensure new development enhances existing biodiversity, character and sense of place.

- 2.10 The Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide SPD consists of a number of Design Guides and provides guidance for local urban design characteristics within Oldham and Rochdale. This SPD highlights that new development should consider the street pattern, building scale, layout and that materiality should reflect and improve the qualities of the local area.

- 2.11 Greater Manchester's Green Infrastructure, Next Steps towards a Green Infrastructure Framework sets out how Manchester can develop a Green Infrastructure framework by identifying spatial priorities including:

- The Strategic Green Infrastructure Network;
- Destination Parks, Landmarks and Trails;
- A sustainable movement network; and
- Greening the Urban Environment.

- 2.12 Towards a Green Infrastructure Framework for Greater Manchester SPD identifies existing Green Infrastructure within Greater Manchester and sets out priorities to create and enhance new GI, stating its aim is to:

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## 2 Policy Context

- *ensure our residents enjoy outstanding quality of life;*
- *care for our environment so it protects and sustains property and enterprise;*
- *create a setting for prosperous growth*

### **Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (Revised Draft January 2019)**

- 2.13 Rochdale Council forms part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Combined Authority is currently going through the process of identifying sufficient land to meet the objectively assessed housing needs of all the Councils within the Combined Authority, via the production of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework.
- 2.14 The GMSF proposes to release sufficient green belt in Rochdale to accommodate around 12000 new homes between 2018-2037.
- 2.15 Namely, the site has been allocated in the GMSF under **Policy GM Allocation 2 StakeHill**, whereby development at the site will be required to provide around 900 high quality homes, including larger, higher value properties, to support the new jobs created along the M62 corridor and create a sustainable and high quality extension to the urban area.
- 2.16 With regard to landscape proposals should:
- *Preserve / Enhance the setting of the listed St Johns Church and war memorial*
  - *Retain a strategic area of Green Belt between the A627(M) spur and Thornham Lane to maintain separation between the urban areas of Rochdale and Middleton;*
  - *Provide good quality walking and cycling routes to connect to new and existing residential areas and local transport hubs in order to encourage sustainable short journeys to work and promote healthier lifestyles;*
  - *Ensure that the existing settlements and pockets of housing are taken fully into account through the masterplanning of the area;*
  - *Deliver high quality landscaping and green infrastructure within the site both to enhance the attractiveness of the scheme and provide opportunities for recreation to both residents and people working in the area. This should include good quality boundary treatment, particularly*

*on the southern edge of the site to provide an attractive defensible Green Belt boundary;*

- *Retain and where possible enhance areas of biodiversity within the area, notably the Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest, along with the existing brooks and reservoirs within the site.*

### 3 Landscape Character

#### Landscape Character

- 3.1 The site lies within National Character Area 54: Manchester Pennine Fringe. At a regional level to the site is identified to be within the Urban Fringe Farmland Landscape Character Type (LCT).

#### Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Study (GMLCSS)

- 3.2 As previously mentioned, the site sits within the Urban Fringe Farmland LCT. The character attributes of relevance to the site are summarised as being:

#### Topography

- Rolling landscape with elevation ranging between 30 and 250m AOD. The landform becomes gentler as it falls towards the floodplains of the rivers Mersey and Bollin (from 10 to 60m AOD).

#### Land use and field patterns

- Variable land use, with the more elevated land in the north and east typified by lower grade agricultural land used for dairy farming, horse grazing and sheep rearing. Pockets of dry heath, acid grassland and moorland fringe are also present.
- Pastoral land characterised by small and medium sized fields, forming various patterns from rectilinear to distinctive web shaped originating from Parliamentary enclosure.
- Flatter, more fertile floodplain areas give rise to a mix of pasture and arable cultivation. Fields tend to be larger with subtle boundary features, with occasional small pasture fields to the east of Altrincham.
- Field boundaries comprise often gappy, species-poor hedgerows with occasional established clumps of hedgerow trees. Post and wire fencing replaces hedges in many locations, whilst occasional stone walls provide definition at higher elevations, but many are in a degraded condition.
- Frequent recreational land uses with sports fields and golf courses located close to the urban edge. The manicured lush greens of the courses contrast sharply with areas of semi-improved grazing land.

- The open farmland contrasts strongly with adjoining residential and industrial urban areas, often forming a rural buffer to the Pennine and Dark Peak foothills.

#### Settlement, road pattern and rights of way

- A network of major road and rail routes, including the M62, M61 and A627(M) motorways, form dominant features with extensive cuttings, embankments, bridges and junctions.
- Numerous rights of way and cycle routes permeate the landscape, linking to the surrounding urban areas. The Rotary Way and Rochdale Way are long distance footpaths connecting to the local network.

#### Views and perceptual qualities

- In general the more elevated, rolling farmland has an exposed and open character with little sense of enclosure and strong visual connections with surrounding landscapes.
- Historic mills with tall chimneys and warehouses also form landmarks on the skyline.
- Transport corridors and pylon lines are very apparent, with the lack of tree cover within the rolling open farmland leaving the large roads and motorway visually exposed and audible.

#### Site Specific Character

- 3.3 Overall the site is very much characteristic of the Urban Fringe Farmland LCT, fabricating many of the qualities described in the Greater Manchester Landscape Character and Sensitivity Study.
- 3.4 The site is heavily influenced by the M62 and A627(M) which alongside adjacent boundary planting and cuttings, physically and visually enclose the site to the north, east and south (**Image 2**).
- 3.5 Within the site boundary, the medium to large scale pasture fields have an open appearance due to there being few distinguishable landscape features present.
- 3.6 Broadly speaking, the topography of the site slopes upwards from west to east. A steep hill adjacent to Thornfields farm marks the high point of the site at approximately 180 AOD and forms

a prominent landscape feature (**Image 6**). The higher ground to the west creates a sense of openness with views across the site and out into the surrounding area being afforded.

- 3.7 As is described by the GMLCSS, the sites internal field boundaries are defined by a combination of species poor hedgerows and post and wire fencing (**Image 3**)
- 3.8 There are a number of PRoW which traverse the site that serve to connect it and its users to the wider area (refer to Public Rights of Way and Viewpoint Location Plan). Rochdale Way/ Thornham Lane runs from west to east through the south of the site, acting as a strong physical boundary between the site allocation to the north and area to the south to be retained as Green Belt land (**Image 3**).
- 3.9 Located within the site boundaries to the south west sits St John Thornham Church (**Image 4**). The Grade II listed building is accessible from Thornham Lane and is particularly visible to users of public footpath Mid Fp7 which traverses the site. As previously mentioned, *Policy GM Allocation 2 StakeHill* describes the importance of preserving and enhancing the setting of this building and the associated War Memorial which sits outside.
- 3.10 Further east along Thornham Lane lies St John's CE VA Primary School, with its grounds comprising a small building; a residential property; an area of hardstanding; and, both a hard surface and grass sports pitch.
- 3.11 Thornfield Farm is located to the east within the site and consists of a mix of agricultural units, areas of hardstanding and a residential property.
- 3.12 There are a number of water bodies in the form of ponds located predominantly to the west of the site where the topography is lower (refer to Site Context Plan). As well as providing opportunities for attenuation, *Policy GM Allocation 2 StakeHill* highlights that these natural reservoirs/ponds should be retained and enhanced for biodiversity purposes.
- 3.13 Even though much of the site has an open appearance due to its size, the location adjacent to Slattocks settlement edge gives it a more peri-urban character whereby the built form nucleated around Manchester Road provides a continual development frontage to the west along the sites boundary. Notable inclusions to the built form include the All in One Garden Centre (West), Thornham Cricket Club (South West), Newbey Farm (West) and residential properties of Carnforth and Chatburn Avenue (North West) (refer to **Landscape and Site Context Plan** and **Image 1**)



### 3 Landscape Character



**Image 1:** The site is enclosed to the west by a continual development frontage centred around Manchester Road which places the site, namely the western half, within a peri urban setting context.



**Image 2:** The site is enclosed to the north, east and south by the M62 and A627 motoways.



**Image 3:** There are a number of PRoW that traverse the site which are regularly lined by wooden post and wire fencing



**Image 4:** St Johns Church and War Memorial, both of which are Grade II listed, sit to the south west of the site.



**Image 5:** The site is physically and visually seperated from the adjacent motorways by robust boundary vegetation planting.



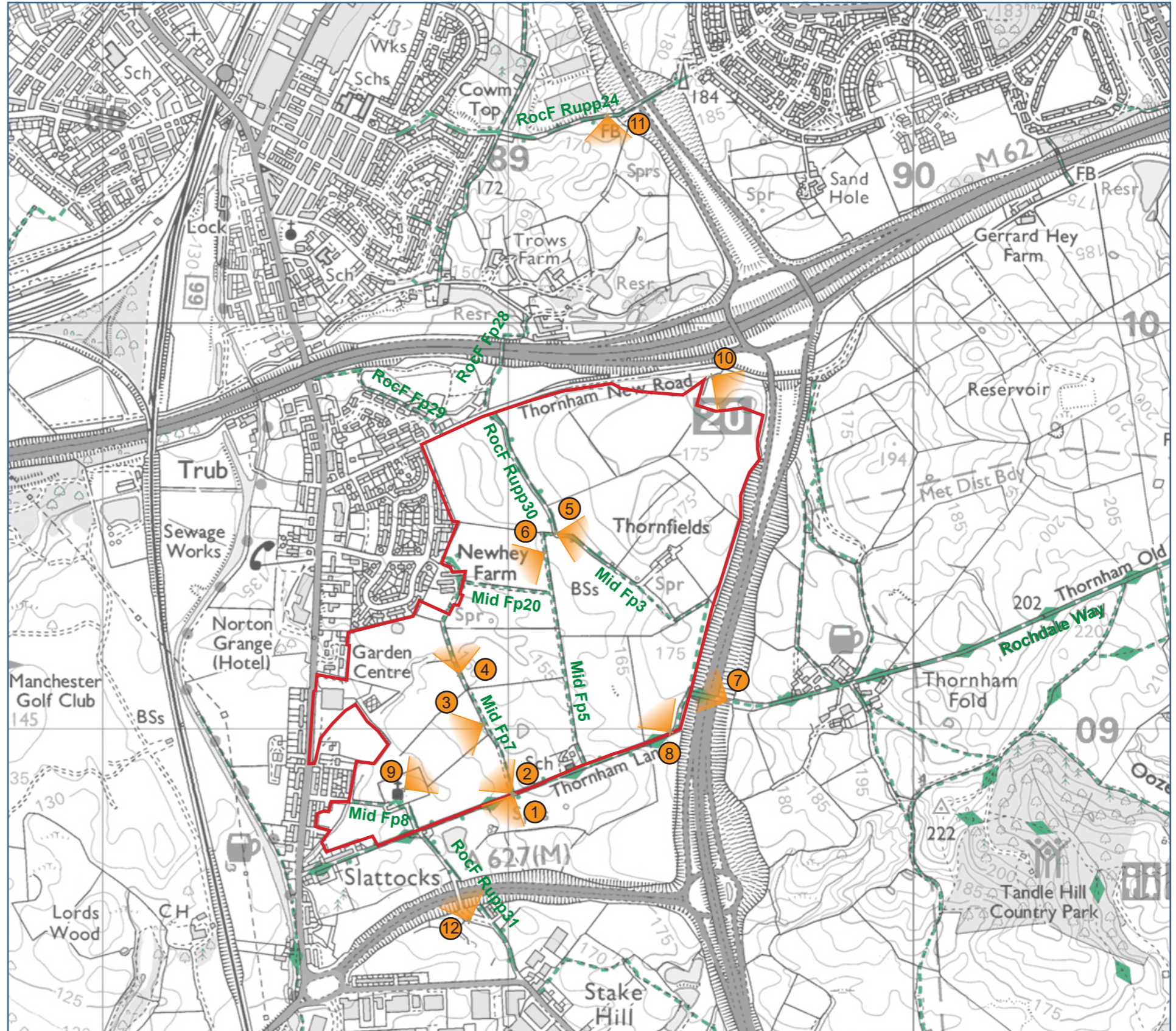
**Image 6:** The hill north west of Thornfields farm serves as a distinguishable landscape feature within the site.

## 4 Visual Study

### Summary of Views/Visibility

- 4.1 Overall despite the size of the site and its varied topography, visibility is largely localised to within its boundaries due to the influence of both Slattocks settlement edge and the adjacent M62 and A627 motorways. The approximate extent of the visual envelope is set out below:
- **To the north-** raised topography means there are views afforded onto the site from footpath RocF Rupp24 and its associated bridge crossing over the M62 (**Photoviewpoint 11**). There may also be views into the site for residents of the properties at Kirkholts southern edge. Moreover, there are potentially long distance views from the north west where the topography increases greatly towards the south pennines, however these would be minimal
  - **To the east-** views outside of the sites boundary are wholly obstructed by the substantial boundary vegetation adjacent to both sides of the A627 (**Photoviewpoint 7**)
  - **To the south-** similarly, views onto the site are largely obstructed by robust boundary planting adjacent to the A627. Visibility is afforded onto the site however when approaching it via public footpath RocF Rupp31, yet the extent of these views are limited to the south westerly most field which is to be retained as Green Belt land (**Photoviewpoint 12**)
  - **To the west-** there are no publicly accessible views of the site due to Slattocks intervening built form. Residents of the properties adjoining the site however have open visibility across the site (refer to properties shown in **Photoviewpoint 3 and 4**)
  - **Internally-** the site is well served by a series of footpaths which traverse its area, allowing for expansive views across the extents. Generally, views from the internal western footpaths and St John's church are confined to the western half of the site below the ridgeline (roughly indicated by Mid Fp5) (**Photoviewpoint 9**). **Photoviewpoints 5 and 6** illustrate where views of the site are most open in all directions.
- 4.2 In summary, the site sits within a well screened enclosure whereby views are most susceptible to the north where the topography increases and the level of boundary planting becomes less substantial. Accordingly, our Opportunities and Constraints plan (**Plan 3**) puts forward recommendations to retain and enhance the site's landscape character and features.

Plan 2: Public Rights of Way and Viewpoint Location Plan (12412\_P02)





Photoviewpoint 1: View taken from Thornham Lane/Rochdale Way looking south west across the land proposed to be retained as Green Belt.

Orientation: South West



Photoviewpoint 2: View taken from Thornham Lane/Rochdale Way looking north west into the site from public footpath Mid Fp7's access gate.

Orientation: North West



**Photoviewpoint 3:** Taken from public footpath Mid Fp7 within the site looking west towards Slattocks settlement edge and St John's Church.

**Orientation:** West



**Photoviewpoint 4:** View taken from public footpath Mid Fp7 within the site looking towards Slattocks north western residential settlement edge.

**Orientation:** North

4 Visual Study



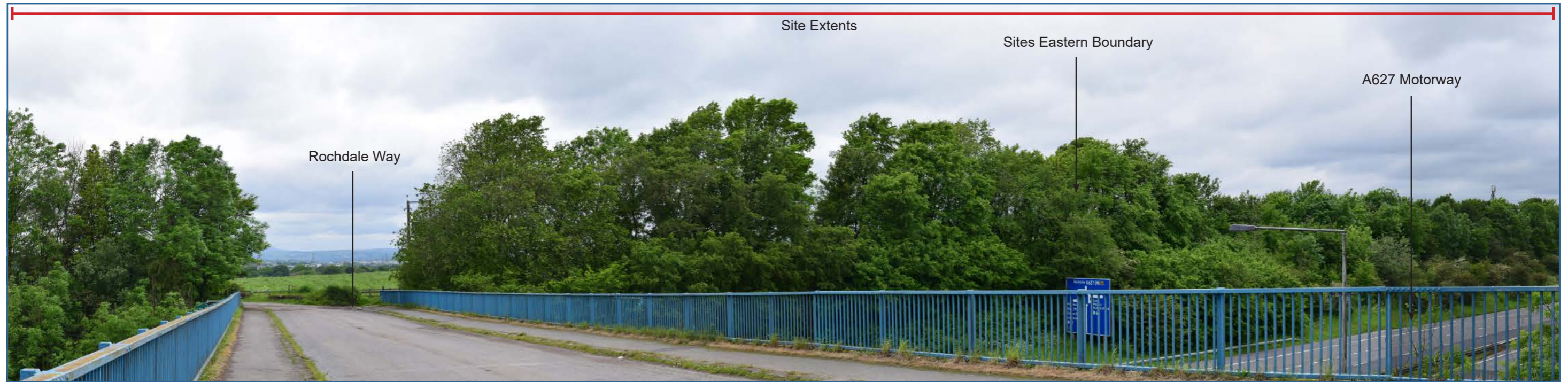
Photoviewpoint 5: Taken from public footpath Mid Fp5 within the site looking east.

Orientation: East



Photoviewpoint 6: Taken from public footpath Mid Fp5 within the site looking towards Manchester in the backdrop

Orientation: South West



Photoviewpoint 7: View taken from Rochdale Way looking at the sites eastern boundary and entrance.

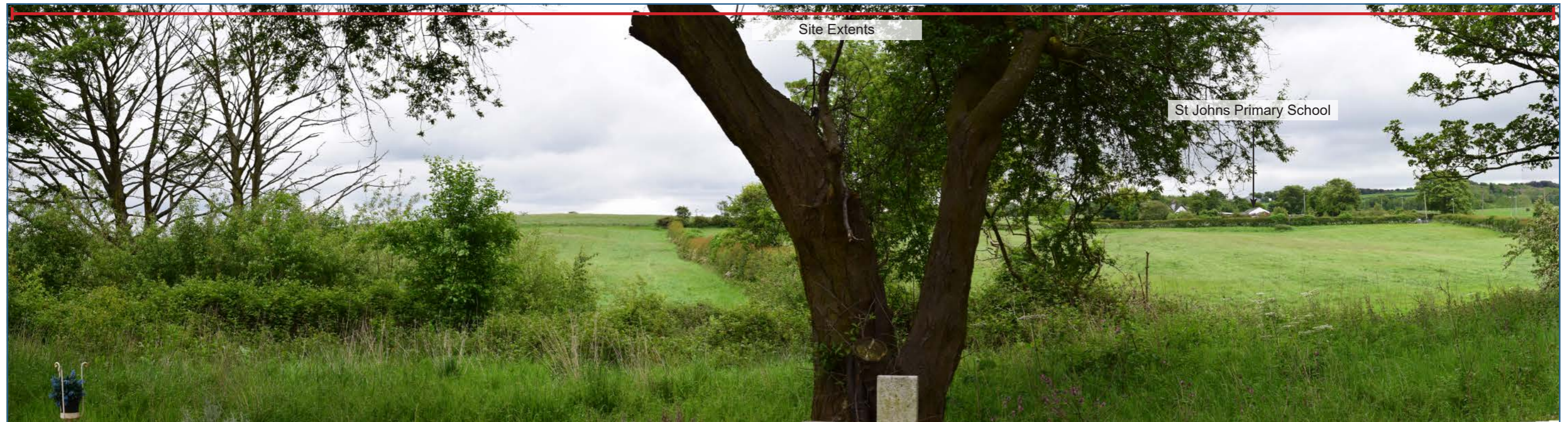
Orientation: West



Photoviewpoint 8: Taken from along Crown Lane, looking towards the sites eastern boundary.

Orientation: North West

4 Visual Study



Photoviewpoint 9: Taken from St John's Church yard looking into the site.

Orientation: East



Photoviewpoint 10: Taken from Thornham New Road looking eastwards towards the sites north eastern corner.

Orientation: North West



Photoviewpoint 11: Taken from public footpath RocF Rupp24 to the north of site looking south.

Orientation: South



Photoviewpoint 12: View taken from public footpath RocF Rupp31 to the south of the site looking onto the land south of site to be retained as Green Belt,

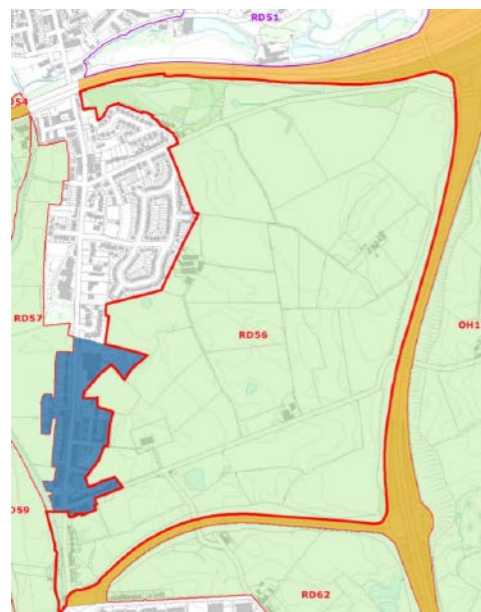
Orientation: North



## 5 Green Belt

### **Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment (2016)**

- 5.1 *Policy GM Allocation 2* of the GMSF proposes that the allocation site is removed from the Green Belt. A review of the site's performance and suitability for release is summarised below in relation to the principal Green Belt objectives as set out within the NPPF (the Framework), with consideration of paragraph 136 of the Framework, in terms of positively enhancing Green Belt.
- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the Green Belt should serve the five following purposes:
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up area;
  - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
  - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
  - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
  - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 5.3 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. Once established, Green Belts should only be altered where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, through the preparation or updating of plans (NPPF paragraph 136).
- 5.4 The Council's Green Belt Assessment identifies strategic land parcels that cover the areas of Green Belt land in the Borough. The site lies within Parcel RD56:



### **Site Specific Assessment**

- 5.5 Having identified the findings of the Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment for the parcel containing the site (RD56), a site-specific assessment of contribution that the site makes to the Green Belt purposes and opportunities for the release of land from the Green Belt is set out below.

#### To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

- 5.6 As described in the Landscape Character section of this report, the site's sense of openness is heavily influenced by the built edges which enclose it. Namely, the site is physically and visually contained by the ribbon development stemming from Manchester Road to the west which places the site within the built extents of the Slattocks settlement. The built structures associated with St Johns Primary School and Church, alongside the presence of Thornfields Farm, also act as urbanising features within the site which detract from the overall visual openness.
- 5.7 Furthermore, the M62 and A627 serve as readily recognisable and permanent boundaries which would ensure development would not sprawl any further to north, east or south.
- 5.8 The GMGBA assessment of Parcel RD56 considers that the parcel has a moderate/strong contribution to preventing urban sprawl of Castleton. The main reason being the limited influence the urbanising features have over the openness within the site due to the undulating land restricting visibility towards the urban edge. However, it does also acknowledge the strength of the boundaries present in the form of the M62 motorway and A627 which would restrict sprawl for the site itself. It will be important to ensure development within the parcel does not encourage more ribbon development along Thornham New Road or Thornham Lane, however, through allocation of the site and the consideration of a strategy for new development, these areas could still be developed in a way in which ribbon development is not a dominant feature.

#### To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

- 5.9 In terms of the merging of settlements, a key consideration is the strength and permanence of existing boundaries. As set out above the site is physically well contained by the existing road network.
- 5.10 The site lies between Castleton to the north and Middleton to the south. As recommended in the GMSF, the land to the south of the site (see Photoviewpoint 1) could be retained as Green Belt

land to provide both a visual and physical separation between the two settlements with the means of woodland or structural planting.

- 5.11 The NPPF also considers at paragraph 138 that plans should: "... set out ways in which the impact of removing land from the Green Belt can be offset through compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt land." Accordingly, there are opportunities to enhance the parcel of land to the south with landscape features which would improve the distinct identity of Castleton, thus preventing the perception of merging.
- 5.12 The GMGBA assessment for parcel RD56 considers the parcel to play a strong role in preventing neighbouring towns from merging into one another, specifically with reference to Castleton to the north and Middleton to the south. The site itself is detached from Middleton to the south by the A627. This does form a robust edge to prevent merging but due to the development already present along Rochdale Road, there is the perception of a continuation into Middleton. The level of separation currently present can be maintained and emphasised through the incorporation of a development offset and new soft landscaping along the A627 to the south of the site, which would assist in ensuring the two settlement edges register as different places.

#### To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

- 5.13 Indeed, whilst the site fabricates many of the rural qualities which are characteristic of the Urban Fringe Farmlands LCT, the influence of the M62, A627 and Manchester Road serve to place the site within a more peri urban context. Development to the west of the site in particular would not be incongruous with the existing built form, whilst development further east could be of lower density and incorporate areas of open space to retain and integrate important elements of the countryside, including: historic field boundaries, and open view lines towards the south Pennines and distinguishable areas of raised topography. The incorporation of a development offset and restriction of building heights to not above 2.5 storeys would also ensure the existing skyline is maintained within wider views from the east.
- 5.14 The GMGBA assessment considers the site to play a strong role in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment; but this is described as being based on the fact the site is undeveloped at present, and that the urbanising influences at its boundaries are somewhat not perceived internally due to the undulating ground levels. The assessment states the parcel has "an intact and rural

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## 5 Green Belt

in character and displays characteristics of the countryside". However, the rural qualities and characteristics present do have to be appreciated within the peri-urban context the site is located. Any sense of being within a rural setting will be most pertinent for users of public rights of way crossing the site, and these users can still experience a countryside walk through the site when developed provided the appropriate development offsets and green infrastructure features are incorporated within any future development response.
















*To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*

- 5.15 In line with the Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment, our findings agree that the site makes no contribution towards the preservation or setting of a historic town.

# 6 Landscape Opportunities and Constraints

## Plan 3: Opportunities and Constraints Plan (12412\_P03)



-  Site Boundary
-  Potential Development Parcels (High-Low Density)
-  Retention and Enhancement of Existing Boundary Vegetation
-  Provision of New Boundary Vegetation
-  Area of Topographical Sensitivity
-  Development to Respect the Setting of the Church
-  Existing Ponds to be Retained and Enhanced where possible
-  Land South of Thorham to be Retained and Enhanced as Green Belt
-  Retention and Enhancement of Existing Internal Field Boundary Vegetation where possible
-  Key Views Identified
-  Development Offset
-  Existing Public Rights of Way/Bridleway
-  St John Thornham Primary School - To be Expanded
-  St John Thornham Church and War Memorial (Grade II Listed)
-  Annotation Reference

Project | Manchester Road, Rochdale  
 Drawing Title | Opportunities and Constraints Plan  
 Scale | Not to Scale  
 Drawing No. | 12412 P03  
 Date | June 2019  
 Checked | EF/AL



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## 6 Landscape Opportunities and Constraints and Conclusion

### Recommendations

6.1 In response to the landscape and visual baseline analysis, a series of opportunities and constraints have been identified (see **Plan 3: Opportunities and Constraints Plan**) to ensure that the development response reflects the local circumstances and addresses opportunities for landscape enhancement.

1. Adhering with *Policy GM Allocation 2 StakeHill*, development proposals should look to respect the setting provided by St Johns Church and War memorial, both of which are Grade II listed structures as highlighted on Plan 3.
2. The variable topography of the site presents both opportunities and constraints. The steep hill adjacent to Thornfields Farm in particular stands out as a distinguishable landscape feature which when stood on top of, offers widespanning vistas to the north, south and west. Lower density development should also be considered for the higher parts of the site (see site visibility in **Photoviewpoint 12**)
3. Robust corridors of green infrastructure border the site to the north, east and south; serving as physical and visual barriers between the site and adjacent M62 and A627 motorways. It is vital these vegetation boundaries are retained and enhanced for landscape structure and biodiversity purposes. Moreover, the Initial Noise Constraint Assessment recommends that dwellings along the northern and eastern boundaries should be orientated to be facing the vegetation boundaries adjacent to the M62 so that the rear gardens are screened from the noise generated.
4. Marginal land to the north of the site could be enhanced/ incorporated as public open space due to its proximity to the A627 and enclosure by tree planting which serve to hinder the areas suitability for development.
5. The land to the south of the site/south of Thornham Lane should be retained as Green Belt land (as outlined in the GMSF) to maintain separation between the urban areas of Rochdale and Middleton. Furthermore there are opportunities to enhance this retained land for landscape and biodiversity purposes.
6. There are several ponds and natural reservoirs located around the site which should be retained and enhanced for biodiversity where possible.

7. The site is well served by Public Rights of Way which improve access to and from the area. These footpaths should be preserved to connect any new development and encourage walking/a healthier lifestyle.
8. The field boundaries present on site that are defined by hedge planting should be retained and enhanced where possible to support landscape structure and provide biodiversity benefits
9. The largely variable topography of the surrounding area and of Greater Manchester in general presents views from within the site creating visual interest; particularly towards Manchester's skyline in the south (**Photoviewpoint 6**) and the South Pennines in the north.
10. There are opportunities for vegetation planting at the sites northern boundary where it is less substantial. Doing so would create a more cohesive boundary, provide biodiversity benefits, and also serve to filter views of the site which are currently experienced (see **Photoviewpoint 11**) and therefore of any potential development.
11. Higher density development should be focused towards the west of the parcel as it would not be incongruous with the adjacent existing built form surrounding Manchester Road.

### Conclusion

- 6.2 Whilst it is appreciated that only a broad level assessment has been undertaken, this technical note has demonstrated that development could be accommodated with reference to site specific circumstances and the ability to deliver sustainable growth in the Rochdale District.
- 6.3 Importantly, from a landscape and visual standpoint this report supports the proposed allocation of the site for the residential development as part of the upcoming GMSF and its subsequent release from the Green Belt.