



**Proof of Evidence in relation to  
Landscape and Visual Impact Matters**

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On behalf of Sheffield City Council

May 2021

Appellant :	HALLAM LAND MANAGEMENT LIMITED
Appeal Site :	Land at Hollin Busk, Stocksbridge, Sheffield
Planning Inspectorate Appeal Ref	APP/J4423/W/21/3267168
Application Ref	17/04673/OUT

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## **1. Author's Qualification and Experience**

- 1.1. My name is Ricardo Ares. I am a Landscape Architect and have been in professional practice for 23 years. I have been a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute since January 2001.
- 1.2. I originally completed an undergraduate degree in Civil and Structural Engineering at the University of Sheffield from 1990-2004, followed by a postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Design from University of Sheffield from 2006-2008
- 1.3. After a career in a variety of private practices, which allowed me to develop experience of working in all sectors of development, I founded Ares Landscape Architects Ltd in 2011, a private landscape consultancy based originally in West Yorkshire. We now operate a main office in Sheffield, where I am based, and additional offices in London and Cheltenham.
- 1.4. As a result of my academic development, and my experience of professional practice in the city, I am very familiar with Sheffield as a whole and the area of Stocksbridge and Deepcar where the appeal site is located.
- 1.5. I am responsible for a wide portfolio of development projects across a wide range of sectors, including education, residential, public realm, retail and leisure landscape schemes. Many of these projects have required landscape impact assessments. I am fully conversant with the assessment of visual and landscape effects of built development in the urban fringe on both 'brown field' and 'green field' sites, and have previously given evidence at Public Inquiry.
- 1.6. I was approached in March 2021 by Sheffield City Council as an expert Landscape and Visual Impact witness for this Inquiry. Before confirming that I could support the Council's reasons for refusal as set out in paragraph 2.2, I visited the site in early March 2021.
- 1.7. Having identified that I could support the reasons for refusal, I was instructed by SCC to prepare evidence on landscape and visual matters and matters arising as a result of the proposed development.
- 1.8. The evidence which I have provided for this appeal is true and is given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution (The Landscape Institute) and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions. I confirm that I have no conflicts of interest in relation to this appeal.

## 2. Scope and Structure of Evidence

### Scope of evidence

2.1. This appeal follows Sheffield City Council refusal to grant planning permission for an Outline planning application for 85 residential dwellings and detailed means of access on a site to the north of the junction of Carr Road and Hollin Busk Lane in Deepcar, Sheffield.

2.2. The report of the Council's Planning Committee on the 14th July 2020, outlining reasons for refusal states (reasons related to my evidence are **emboldened**):

*6a.6 RESOLVED: That Application No. 17/04673/OUT - Outline application for up to 85 residential dwellings including open space (Amended Description) at Land At Junction With Carr Road, Hollin Busk Lane, Sheffield, S36 1GH be REFUSED **on the grounds of the significant harmful impact on visual amenity both locally and wider**, and the substantial harm to a heritage asset.*

2.3. The decision noticed was issued on the 20th July 2020 and states in relation to landscape and visual matters (policies relevant to my evidence are **emboldened**):

*'The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed development would result in unreasonable harm to the established landscape and to visual amenity at both local and wider levels, creating unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, while also undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements. The resulting adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh any benefits the scheme delivers. As such the proposal is considered to be contrary to Paragraphs **127(c) & 170(b)** of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies **GE4 & LR5(I&j)** within the adopted Sheffield Unitary Development Plan and Policies CS23, CS24 & **CS72** within the adopted Sheffield Development Framework Core Strategy.'*

2.4. The scope of this evidence is limited to setting out the scale and significance of the likely effect of the proposed development on landscape and visual receptors, and the degree to which it would harm the landscape character and visual appearance of the area.

2.5. For consistency, I have adopted the same scale when determining the significance of effects as that established in the Appellants submitted LVIA (CD1.11a) . Paragraph 2.19 of that document sets out the following descriptive thresholds:

**Major:** A Major landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change;

**Moderate:** A Moderate landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change;

**Minor:** A Minor landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change;

**Negligible:** A Negligible landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change.

### **Structure of Evidence**

- 2.6. My evidence focusses on the Landscape and Visual Amenity issues of the case and will consider the following:
  - 2.6.1. Issue 1 : The Landscape Quality of the existing site and the immediate surrounding area, including that within Green Belt, and the resulting extent of harm to the existing landscape character of the area
  - 2.6.2. Issue 2 : The extent of harm to visual amenity at both local and wider levels
  - 2.6.3. Issue 3 : the role of the site in visually separating settlements and whether the proposals undermine this role.
- 2.7. The evidence in relation to the above is presented in 4 sections. First, I describe the site and its context. Secondly, I describe landscape relevant Planning Policy and Guidance. Thirdly, I set out the relevant parts of the proposal. Finally, I analyse the likely effects on landscape character and visual amenity as a result of the proposals being developed as proposed, and offer my professional judgement of the overall significance of these effects.
- 2.8. I conclude by summarising my findings.

### **3. The Site – Description & History**

- 3.1. A number of photographs have been included as Appendix A to this Proof, reflecting the current character of the site.

- 3.2. The site extends to approximately 6.5ha and is located to the north of the junction of Carr Road and Hollin Busk Lane in Deepcar, Sheffield, S36 1GH. The site comprises several fields, including some field shelters, and are separated by dry stone walls and post and wire fencing. The fields are in private ownership and are currently used for grazing. The site contains a small number of trees with further trees located along parts of its boundaries. The site has a shallow gradient, generally falling from south to north. The site is bound by Hollin Busk Lane to the south with Green Belt abutting this boundary.
- 3.3. The existing Landscape Character of the site itself is typical of the pastoral uplands of this part of Sheffield. As set out in the Sheffield Preliminary Character Assessment (CD 7.2), these areas are characterised by an enclosed upland landscape with wide views. Landform consists of high, gently undulating uplands and broad ridge summits extending from the Dark Peak and sloping up to higher ground in places. Isolated stone farmsteads, straight roads and regular fields enclosed by dry stone walls are characteristic features. The dominant land use is pastoral farmland but includes some arable areas.
- 3.4. The overall effect is that the site displays a consistent rural character, and feels very much part of the open countryside. The pastoral fields, dry stone walls, wooded boundaries and openness of the site all combine to create a pleasant and scenic feel.
- 3.5. When viewed from Hunshelf Bank, (Appendix A Photo 1), the site is visually contiguous to the Green Belt above Hollin Busk Lane, with no obvious distinction between the two. The Peak District sits clearly in the background and the physical boundary of Hollin Busk Lane is perceived as one of a number of field boundaries which give the landscape its overall character. These elements combine to create an obvious green break between the built form of Stocksbridge and Deepcar.
- 3.6. When viewed from the East (Appendix A Photo 2), the enclosed green fields, occasional tree cover, and traditional dry-stone walling are clearly visible, reinforcing the rural nature of this countryside area. The site sits comfortably within this context, displaying the archetypal features of the Upland Pastoral Hills and Ridges, as previously described.
- 3.7. When viewed from the south (Appendix A Photo 3), the falling topography means that the site is perceived to be part of a continuous landscape which then rises as the northern side of the valley.

- 3.8. When viewed from the South and East (along Hollin Busk Lane) it is not possible to discern the main built form of Stocksbridge from the areas to the north or the east of the site.
- 3.9. The site is currently accessed from Carr Road via an informal field gate. Although it has no public access. It is allocated as an Open Space Area (OSA) on the Sheffield Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map (CD 3.5) and forms the eastern part of a larger OSA allocation which extends to the west and north west.
- 3.10. The site adjoins several further agricultural fields to the south which run to Hollin Busk Lane and set the character of the site as part of the wider landscape.
- 3.11. Fox Glen wood, an Area of Natural History Interest (ANHI) and Local Wildlife Site (LWS), runs along the remainder of the site's north western boundary, and includes a number of prominent viewpoints of the development site from public footpaths and public rights of way (PROW's) within Fox Glen Wood. From these, (Appendix A Photo 4), users of this footpath network have clear views over the open fields, and the Green Belt to the north of Hollin Busk Lane.
- 3.12. Carr Road runs along the south eastern site boundary with dwellings located within an allocated housing area beyond.
- 3.13. A cluster of properties and a small field are also located along the eastern boundary between the site and Carr Road. Some of these properties are Grade II Listed (Royd Farmhouse and a barn and farm buildings).

### **Surroundings**

- 3.14. The site is easily visible from a large area to the immediate south, with short, middle and longer distance views afforded along Hollin Busk Lane, Cockshot Lane and Stone Moor Road. This is as set out in Figure 9 of the LVIA submitted by the appellant, which includes the extent of the Representative Visual Envelope.
- 3.15. However, and this is not reflected in the same Figure, there is a significant area to the north of the site, comprising a large section of the northern valley side, where open clear views of the site available. This stretches for a long section of Public Rights of Way and local scenic viewing points, includes areas of Access Land, as well as residential dwelling, and the Public Highway including the A616 Stocksbridge Bypass. These areas should be included within the Representative Visual Envelope. This

additional area from which the site is clearly visible is set out in Appendix C - Amended Representative Visual Envelope.

- 3.16. The site sits in an area of countryside adjacent to the urban area of Stocksbridge/Deepcar, and forms a clear and substantial visual break between built-up areas when viewed from a number of vantage points. Whilst this may or may not be afforded any Policy weight as described in Section 4, it is nevertheless a characteristic of this area. The wider context is comprised of areas of occasional built development within a green belt setting, made up of enclosed fields with open views, and occasional landscape infrastructure such as woodland and tree planting. The overall effect is of a patchwork landscape of mixed use, rural in character with occasional development.

#### 4. Policy and Guidance

- 4.1. There are number of policy and guidance notes which have a bearing on the Council's case. They are highlighted in this section, with the most relevant sections **emboldened**.

##### **National Planning Policy Framework**

- 4.2. Section 12. Achieving well-designed places, states in Paragraph 127,(c) that Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:

***c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);***

- 4.3. Section 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment, states in Paragraph 170 (b) that Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

***b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;***

##### **Sheffield Unitary Development Plan**

- 4.4. Policy GE4 Development and the Green Belt environment states that:

***The scale and character of any development which is permitted in the Green Belt, or would be conspicuous from it, should be in keeping with the area and,***



**wherever possible, conserve and enhance the landscape and the natural environment.**

- 4.5. Policy LR5 (i & j) Development in Open Space Areas, states that Development in Open Space Areas will not be permitted where:

***(i) it would result in over-development or harm the character of an area; or***

***(j) it would harm the rural character of a wedge of open countryside;***

**Sheffield Core Strategy (CD 3.1)**

- 4.6. Policy CS47(b) seeks to safeguard open space by preventing development, that amongst other things would result in the loss of open space that is of high quality or of heritage, landscape or ecological value.

Although the site does not fall within Green Belt land (it is adjacent to it), the Sheffield Core Strategy makes a specific reference to the countryside to the south of Stocksbridge which is not Green belt.

- 4.7. Policy CS72 states:

*Protecting Countryside not in the Green Belt The green, open and rural character of areas on the edge of the built-up areas but not in the Green Belt will be safeguarded through protection as open countryside, including the following locations:*

***d. south of Stocksbridge (at Hollin Busk).***

- 4.8. The explanatory text of CS72 highlights that;

*The land at Hollin Busk is a large and integral part of the countryside south of Stocksbridge, prominent in local views and providing an important visual break between the settlements of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. Its rural character is greatly valued locally and there is no need to develop it as new housing can be provided on previously developed land within the urban area. Indeed, protection of the area makes a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge.*

- 4.9. Within the City Policies and Sites Document (2013), the site and the surrounding area was identified on the Proposals Map as a “Countryside Area (Non-Green Belt)”. Although this policy was never formally adopted, the character and appearance of the site has not materially changed since that time and retains all the characteristics that led to the proposal being made.

4.10. Policy G6A Development in Countryside Areas including the Green Belt states:

*“The openness, distinctive character and quality of the countryside around the city will be protected and where possible enhanced. In Countryside Areas:*

***a. development will only be permitted for uses that are appropriate in rural areas and which would not harm the rural character of the area or lead to unsustainable patterns of development;***

4.11. Landscape Character is addressed by Policy G6B which states that:

*“Development within, or conspicuous from, Countryside Areas, will only be permitted where it would safeguard the identified character and features of the following landscape character areas:*

*Upland Character Areas*

*a. Moorland Ridge*

***b. Pastoral Hills and Ridges***

*c. Upland Rolling Slopes and Valleys to the West*

*d. Upland Rolling Slopes and Valleys to the East*

*e. Upland Wooded Ridges and Slope*

4.12. The Site is identified by the Sheffield Preliminary Landscape Character Assessment (2011) (CD7.2) as sitting within this second category of Upland Character Areas, Pastoral Hills and Ridges

4.13. The Peak District Landscape Strategy & Action Plan (2009) (CD 7.4) identifies the site as sitting within the Dark peak Yorkshire Fringe Area. Within this area, it is further identified as Enclosed Gritstone Upland. It states that:

*“This is a pastoral upland landscape with drystone walls, straight roads and isolated farmsteads. Agricultural improvement and grazing have reduced the ecological diversity of the pastures. The priority should be to protect the historic field pattern and conserve or restore the biodiversity of pastoral farmland. Where opportunities arise, consideration should be given to the creation of an open landscape, restoring and creating heathland.”*

4.14. The same report contains a series of landscape guidelines. The following are considered to be a “priority throughout the landscape type”.

*“Protect and maintain historic drystone walls”*

*“Drystone walls are an important historical feature in the more upland landscapes in the Dark Peak Yorkshire Fringe, e.g the Enclosed and Densely Enclosed Gritstone Uplands. In places, the management of walls is declining and there is a need to enhance their management in order to conserve and retain the cherished historic field pattern”*

*“Manage and enhance the diversity of agricultural grasslands”*

*“Many grasslands have been improved or reseeded with a consequent loss of species diversity. There is a need to manage these grasslands in a more sustainable way that retains species diversity whilst supporting productive agriculture. Opportunities to extend and enhance the management of unimproved grasslands should be sought, mainly in the Enclosed Gritstone Upland.”*

- 4.15. It should be noted that the characteristics of the appeal site are entirely representative of this landscape typology, and therefore of particular importance determining the site’s landscape character.

## **5. Description of the Proposal**

- 5.1. The appellant sought outline planning permission for the construction of up to 85 dwellings on the site, and a detailed means of access from Carr Road only. Layout, scale, external appearance, landscaping and access within the site is reserved. The revised parameter plans (CD1.4a-g) illustrate how dwellings could be contained within a number of development parcels, divided by elements of green infrastructure, and comprise of a mix of individual houses.
- 5.2. An illustrative masterplan (CD1.3) accompanies the application and demonstrates one possible configuration for how the proposed housing development could be accommodated on the site.
- 5.3. Within the Design and Access Statement Dec 2018 (CD 1.10) , the scheme is described as having *“The majority of dwellings are likely to be 2 storey in height with potential for some 2.5 storey units to be located in key locations such as junctions, entrances and frontage onto open space to create visual interest”*
- 5.4. Elsewhere, within the LVIA the proposed development was modelled at a maximum height parameter plan of 10m to generate the Zone of Theoretical Visibility (Figure 8 of the LVIA). Given there no definitive height has been set elsewhere within the

proposals, it has been assumed for the purposes of this Proof that a maximum building height of 10m might be expected.

## 6. Analysis

6.1. My section 3 describes the physical characteristics of the site, but this analysis seeks to establish the baseline conditions of it's landscape.

### **Issue 1 : The Landscape Quality of the existing site and the immediate surrounding area, including that within the Green Belt, and the resulting extent of harm to the existing landscape character of the area**

6.2. The appellant argues that the site is of medium landscape value, and that the site is tolerant of change in the form of well-planned development. This argument is based on a number of factors which have been assessed in line with guidance from GLVIA3 (CD ref). I will now run through each individually and set out where I disagree. These comprise:

- Designation
- Landscape Quality (Condition)
- Scenic Quality
- Representativeness
- Recreation Value
- Perceptual Aspects

#### **Designation**

6.3. GLVIA3 Paragraph 5.19 (CD7.5) advises that in the first instance, a review of existing landscape designations is usually the starting point in understanding value. The appellant makes the case that the site has no formal landscape quality designation and infers from this that the site is of medium Landscape value.

6.4. The GLVIA3 Paragraph 5.27 (CD7.5) also states:

*"Where local designations are not in place a fresh approach may be needed. As a starting point reference to existing Landscape Character Assessments and associated planning policies or landscape strategies and guidelines may give an indication of*

*which landscape types or areas, or individual elements or aesthetic or perceptual aspects of the landscape are particularly valued”*

- 6.5. As previously set out, the site is identified within the Sheffield UDP (CD 3.5) as an Open Space Area. This designation seeks to protect these areas from the many pressures from development - particularly those which are in private ownership.
- 6.6. It is also included within the Peak District Strategy and Action Plan (CD 7.4). The site lies within the Peak District’s definition of the Dark Peaks Yorkshire Fringe, and further identifies it as “Enclosed Gritstone Uplands” in character.

*“ This is a pastoral upland landscape with drystone walls, straight roads and isolated farmsteads. Agricultural improvement and grazing have reduced the ecological diversity of the pastures. The priority should be to protect the historic field pattern and conserve or restore the biodiversity of pastoral farmland. Where opportunities arise, consideration should be given to the creation of an open landscape, restoring and creating heathland”*

- 6.7. Furthermore, it is specifically named within the Sheffield Core Strategy. Policy CS72 (CD3.1) states with regard to the site area in the explanatory text, that:

*“The land at Hollin Busk is a large and integral part of the countryside south of Stocksbridge, prominent in local views and providing an important visual break between the settlements of Stocksbridge and Deepcar. Its rural character is greatly valued locally and there is no need to develop it as new housing can be provided on previously developed land within the urban area. Indeed, protection of the area makes a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Stocksbridge.*

- 6.8. Whilst the appellant argues this policy should not be afforded weight in planning terms as it is restrictive, the inclusion of the site specifically in this document, together with the identification of clear landscape characteristics of value, demonstrates it is considered to be of high value by Sheffield City Council. It is also stated as having high value to the local community.
- 6.9. Within City Policies and Sites Document (2013), the site, as well as being identified on the Proposals Map as a “Countryside Area (Non-Green Belt)”. Although this policy was never formally adopted, it identifies the site as being of particular value to SCC at that time. The landscape character and appearance of the site has not materially changed since that time, and retains all the characteristics that led to the proposal being made.

- 6.10. The various regional and local planning strategies, and proposed designations, and my own experience of the site, leads to the conclusion that the site, its characteristics of openness, and the contribution it makes to the local landscape, are of high local value as evidenced through designations by others.

### **Landscape Quality (Condition)**

- 6.11. As set out in GLVIA3 Box 5.1 (CD7.5), the Landscape Quality (Condition) is a measure of the physical state of the landscape. It includes the extent to which typical character is represented in individual areas, the intactness of the landscape and the condition of individual elements. Whilst the appellant acknowledges in the submitted LVIA that the site and the local landscape show no signs of degradation, and the fabric is relatively intact, it concludes that it is only in a reasonable to moderate condition. Having set out the physical characteristics of the site previously, and demonstrated how these are typical of this landscape character type, it is my judgement that the site and surrounding landscape are in fact in very good condition, and as such should be considered of High Landscape Quality

### **Scenic Quality**

- 6.12. Scenic Quality must also be considered when assessing the value of a landscape. The appellant states in the submitted LVIA that whilst the wider landscape is 'pleasant and attractive', the site does not "in itself display any pronounced sense of scenic quality". The site photographs (Appendix A) used to illustrate the site description in Section 3 demonstrate how, in fact, there is little distinction between the site, the adjacent Green Belt and the Peak District Landscape. The appellant suggests in the submitted LVIA that as the site is not 'out of the ordinary' in landscape terms. It is the fact that the site is entirely characteristic of, and in-keeping with, its high quality landscape context which confirms its scenic quality. The openness, regularity and consistency of upland pasture, enclosed with traditional gritstone walls, when viewed within the setting of the wider landscape, create a tranquil landscape of High Scenic Quality.

### **Representativeness**

- 6.13. Representativeness is described in GLVIA3 Box 5.1 (CD7.5) as the landscape containing particular characteristics, features or elements which are considered important. With the site and surrounding areas displaying all the typical landscape elements of the Upland Pastoral Hills and Ridges, itself an important landscape character in need of protection and enhancement (CD 7.4) I consider it a fair

assumption to describe the site as highly representative of this Landscape Character Type.

### **Recreational Use**

6.14. Whilst the site is not available for recreational use, but it contributes significantly to the setting of Fox Glenn, itself a site of high recreational value and formally designated within the UDP plan of Stocksbridge as an Area of Natural History Interest (ANHI).

The appellants own submitted LVIA (CD1.11a) states that site the provides some local value for the adjacent community.

### **Perceptual Aspects**

6.15. A landscape may be valued for its perceptual Qualities. These are the qualities of a site that could lead one to experience a sense of tranquillity, or wildness, which may be valued highly, as opposed to the perception of a site that may be busy, or noisy in a built-up urban area.

6.16. The submitted LVIA makes the case that *“The site’s close relationship with the surrounding built-up area and its associated elements have an influence on the site. As a consequence, the site does not exhibit any pronounced sense of tranquillity or any notion of wildness, in comparison for example to the evident sense of wildness and tranquillity displayed within the moors of the Peak District.”*

6.17. The topography of the surrounding areas, with the majority of urban development located on the hillside as it drops towards the valley bottoms, means most of the built form of Stocksbridge is not actually perceptible from within the site. This is clearly demonstrated in Photographs 2, 3 & 4 from Appendix A – Site Photographs.

6.18. Whilst it is hard to disagree with the statement that the site is unlike the moors, it does not necessarily follow that the site is not tranquil. It is evident from the way the site is bounded by Fox Glenn nature reserve to the north, the open countryside of the Green Belt to the south and west, and is protected to some degree by Royd Farm and neighbouring buildings from Carr Rd (which in any event is a quiet country Road), that the site is in fact a tranquil extension of the open countryside to the south.

## Landscape Value

6.19. The Appellant's submitted LVIA comes to the conclusion that the site is of medium landscape value. However the various levels of designation outlined above, the high local value assigned by the local community, the intact condition of the landscape features which give the site its distinctive character, its high scenic quality, its representativeness and perceptual aspects, when considered as a whole, would lead any objective assessment to conclude that the site and immediate landscape is of High Landscape Value. That is my view

## Assessment of Landscape Effects

### Susceptibility to Change

- 6.20. Susceptibility to Change is described within the GLVIA3 Paragraph 5.40 (CD7.5) as the capacity of a landscape receptor to absorb development *without undue consequences for the maintenance of the baseline situation*. In other words, a landscape that is tolerant to change would be able to absorb the particular proposed development without changing significantly in character .
- 6.21. Since landscape effects are particular to both the specific landscape in question and the specific nature of the proposed development, the assessment of susceptibility must be tailored to the project.
- 6.22. The Appellant states in the LVIA that *"the site and the immediate landscape is considered to be of medium susceptibility to change and has the ability to absorb well-planned development."*
- 6.23. In the case of the site and immediate context, that judgement would suggest that the proposed residential development would not significantly affect the landscape characteristics of the site and immediate area, previously identified as pastoral fields with open views, and a distinctly rural character.
- 6.24. In correspondence with the Case officer in January 2020 (CD 2.10), SCC's Landscape Officer, Jack Foxhall questioned whether *"the site and immediate landscape context are of medium susceptibility to change and have the ability to absorb development. The openness, regularity and consistency of upland pasture enclosed with stone walls is a key part of this landscape. Housing development on a large scale is not compatible with maintaining these characteristics."*



- 6.25. I share the Officer's concerns. A housing development of the scale proposed is not compatible with maintaining the site landscape characteristics. The proposals as described would result in a marked change to the nature of the site. Large areas of built form, rising to a possible 10m in height the introduction of areas of hardstanding would fundamentally alter the nature of the site and the immediate context. For this reason, the landscape within and around the site should be considered to have a high susceptibility to change.
- 6.26. It is my conclusion that the landscape sensitivity of the site is therefore High. This is reached by combining the High Landscape Value of the site and surrounding areas, and their High Susceptibility to Change.

### **Magnitude of Landscape effects**

- 6.27. The appellants Submitted LVIA states that the mitigation adopted within the proposals "incorporates the conservation of the site's existing landscape elements". This is an inaccurate statement in that there would only be a partial retention of some of the site's existing landscape elements.
- 6.28. The Proposed Development would result in the loss of the site's landscape fabric including some boundary features, the removal of parts of the site's stone walls, and the loss of all open fields with the exception of the westernmost field which is to be retained as species rich grassland. However, this loss of open fields would be adverse, permanent and irreversible.
- 6.29. As a consequence of the development, I consider the likely Magnitude of Landscape Effects on the site and the surrounding area would be High.

### **Significance of Landscape Effects**

- 6.30. In drawing a final conclusion about the significance of the likely Landscape Effects, I am combining the separate judgements on the site and surrounding landscape's sensitivity, and the magnitude of landscape effects as a result of the proposed development.
- 6.31. The submitted LVIA document concluded that the immediate impact on the site and its context was Moderate Adverse, and that the overall effect 10 years after completion would be Moderate to Minor Adverse. This conclusion is only possible if both the baseline Landscape Value and the Magnitude of Change are understated.

- 6.32. In my own professional judgement, I am satisfied that the site and surrounding area are of High Landscape Value, Highly Sensitive to Change, and that the magnitude of change is also High.
- 6.33. The proposal would therefore result in Significant Harm, with the effects to the site and immediately surrounding area being Major Adverse.
- 6.34. As stated in the Reason for Refusal, should the proposed development go ahead, it would result in “*unreasonable harm to the established landscape... creating unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.*”

## **Issue 2 : The extent of harm to visual amenity at both local and wider levels**

- 6.35. The Appellant’s submitted LVIA goes on to assess the likely effects on visual amenity through the establishment of a Visual baseline, and then identifies a number of key visual receptors that it uses to assess the likely visual effects of the development.
- 6.36. In this portion of my evidence I will set out what I consider to be a number of limitations within the original Visual Impact Assessment, and offer my own analysis of the likely effects on visual amenity arising from the development.
- 6.37. These limitations relate specifically to two areas. Firstly, the selection and extent of visual receptors does not constitute an accurate reflection of the areas from which the development will be clearly visible. The incompleteness of this baseline has led to the omission from the LVIA of a number of visual receptors that will experience adverse effects. Secondly, the methodology used in assessing the likely change in the views that have been assessed is inaccurate and incomplete. This has compounded the error in the original assessment, and so underestimates the likely scale of impact on the overall visual amenity of receptors by the Appellant.

### **Extent of Views**

- 6.38. With regards to the selection of visual receptors, the appellant has identified a Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) which is extensive, illustrated in Figure 8 of the Submitted LVIA (CD 11.1b). This ZTV is a ‘bare earth’ model, and in line with best practice considers only topography, and sets out the areas from which development would be visible if there were no obstructions to views.

- 6.39. In reality, landscape elements such as buildings, walls, fences, trees, hedgerows, etc will curtail views from areas within the ZTV, so it is usual to reduce the ZTV through field work confirming where the site would actually be visible from.
- 6.40. The Appellants have termed this reduced area the Representative Visual Envelope (RVE), and this is shown in Figure 9 of the Submitted LVIA (CD 11.1b). Although this is not a generally used term, I will continue to refer to the RVE in the remainder of my evidence as a useful shorthand term for this reduced visual envelope.
- 6.41. Comparing the two figures, it is striking just how far the RVE has reduced on the basis of the Appellant's field work, to the extent that only views from the south of the appeal site are seriously considered.
- 6.42. The Visual Receptors have been identified and classified according to type, and a number of corresponding viewpoints identified that represent the views available to these receptors. It is not possible to include every possible view available to receptors, so representative viewpoints are the most effective way of assessing likely change to visual amenity.
- 6.43. Considering Figure 9, only two receptors are identified to the north of the site, and two corresponding viewpoints taken from this area. Where the receptors to the north are identified (Views 9 and 13), the accompanying description suggests distance is a factor that would reduce the likely significance of visual effects.
- 6.44. The Council's Landscape Officer, Jack Foxhall, originally expressed concerns that the RVE did not include areas to the north of the site (CD2.10), and in correspondence with the Applicant asked that the impact on more distant views from Hunshelf Bank, outside the RVE, should be considered.
- 6.45. I share the Officer's concerns. As previously stated in Section 3, there is a significant area to the north of the site, comprising a large section of the northern valley side, where open clear views of the site are available. This additional area is mapped in Appendix C. This stretches for a long section of Public Rights of Way and local scenic viewing points, includes areas of Access Land, as well as residential dwelling, and the Public Highway including the A616 Stocksbridge Bypass.
- 6.46. Potential Visual Receptors from these areas are all High Sensitivity, given they are likely to be residential properties, users of Public Footpaths, amenity landscape users, or sightseers taking in the view from the Isle of Sky Panoramic viewpoint.

- 6.47. All of these areas are identified within the originally devised Zone of Theoretical Visibility, but have been removed from the Representative Visual Envelope on the basis that intervening topography, built form or landscape infrastructure would block views from these areas.
- 6.48. Through a combination of further desk studies and site visits, I have established that the site is very clearly visible from the northern side of the Stocksbridge Valley, and have included a number of additional photographs to illustrate this point.
- 6.49. As can be seen from Appendix B – Additional Visual Receptors, there are in fact clear views of the site from these areas, extending as far as Carr Head Farm (Photo S1), approximately 3km from the site, stretching to the vicinity of Holly Hall (Photo S6) approximately 1.5km from the site. The argument from the appellant in not including these views, seems to rest on the magnitude of change to the viewer experience.

#### **Sensitivity of receptors**

- 6.50. Susceptibility to Change for visual receptors is described within the GLVIA3 Para 6.32 (CD7.5) as a function of the activity of people experiencing the view, and the extent to which their attention may be focussed on the views.
- 6.51. The receptors set out in the submitted LVIA have been classified according to sensitivity, but a number of obvious receptors have been omitted. For example, the Visual Receptor J has been classified as Highway Users of Carr Road, and sets their sensitivity as Medium to low as *“These receptors are inherently of lower susceptibility to change as they are travelling at comparative speed through the landscape and consequently they afford transient views.”*
- 6.52. This may well be true of highway users but overlooks the fact there is a public footpath that runs along Carr Road, which pedestrians will use to walk around the site. Given that they will be passing the site slowly, and may well include people engaged in outdoor recreation, their Susceptibility to Change should be identified as High.
- 6.53. This is also the case of the footpaths along Hollin Busk Lane (Receptor H), which I observed to be busy with walkers on the occasions I have visited the site, and all the additional receptors identified in Appendix B.
- 6.54. In relation to the Value attached to the views, this should take account of any heritage assets, planning designations, or any indication of value to the views attached by visitors, for example any identification on tourist maps or guidebooks.

- 6.55. The areas identified in paragraph 3.15 include three designated areas of Access Land which have been listed as “ offering superb views across Stocksbridge to the moors behind” on Sheffield City Council Maps (CD7.0a and 7.0b). Furthermore, the Isle of Skye Panoramic Viewpoint is also located within this zone, the view from which is shown in Photograph S3 in Appendix B.
- 6.56. It is my conclusion that the relatively high susceptibility to change of many visual receptors, and the Value attached to many of the views being high, that the sensitivity of many of the identified receptors is higher than stated within the appellants LVIA. All of the additional receptors set out on my Appendix B would also be considered of High Sensitivity.

### **Magnitude of Visual Effects**

- 6.57. In order to accurately assess the likely change to the viewing experience of these receptors, it is important to follow best practice guidance as set out in TGM 06/19 by the Landscape Institute, Visual Representation of Development Proposals (CD 7.6) . In this document, there is a clear direction towards establishing an accurate Horizontal Field of Vision (FoV) that is representative of the human eye.

*“A 'mathematically correct' image is established for a 50mm FL approximately 39.6 Horizontal Field of View (HFoV) image, printed at a size of 390mm x 260mm on an A3 sheet, and held at 542mm 1 from the eye.”*

And

*“the 40° HFoV image captured by a 50mm lens is regarded as being the closest to human eyesight, albeit that we typically have wider peripheral vision”*

- 6.58. The purpose of establishing this standard approach is to ensure, when viewing any photographs of the site, that an accurate assessment can be made of the likely magnitude of change for each receptor, based on the scale of change to the view including the proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development.
- 6.59. However, the photographs of the key viewpoints produced by the appellant appear to have been made up of a wider panoramic shot, either made up of individual images stitched together, or wide angle lenses. The net effect is to reduce the size of the proposed site in any longer distance views, making it appear that the proportion of change to any of these longer distance views would be less than would actually be experienced by receptors.

- 6.60. To state that there would be 'no significant change' to the viewing experience from receptors on the Barnsley Boundary Walk, although within the parameters of Professional Judgement, would seem to be to be a strident comment that the facts do not bear out.
- 6.61. It is my conclusion that Significant Adverse effects on Visual Amenity is more likely on a far wider range of receptors than that set out in the Appellants case.
- 6.62. This statement is made more difficult by the lack of 'before and after' photomontages that would illustrate the likely changes to views resulting from the implementation of the proposed development. It is unusual to see an LVIA submitted as part of a planning submission for a development on a sensitive site which does not include some attempt to visualise the likely change to views. GLVIA3 Para 8.16 (CDref) states that predicted changes to existing views "should also be illustrated by means of visualisations". Furthermore, TG 06/19 (CD 7.6) uses the example of a large housing site with potential implications on a local designation in Section 3.7.3 (4) and suggests this type of application would require Type 3 (photowires or photomontages) visualisations.
- 6.63. The purpose of these visualisations is to allow competent authorities to understand the likely effects of the proposals on views from specific points. Furthermore it is critical that these visualisations are accurate, objective and unbiased.
- 6.64. The Landscape Institute states that these Visualisations should seek to represent the proposals in a format to be agreed with the LPA, and should be used in cases where evidence is submitted to Public Inquiry, and most planning applications accompanied by LVIA.
- 6.65. In the case of the Hollin Busk development, the likely effects on visual amenity have been described as ranging from Major-Moderate adverse to the closest and most sensitive receptors, dropping to Minor Adverse and Negligible
- 6.66. In many cases, the Landscape Officer for Sheffield City Council challenged these results but was unable to alter the results of the submitted LVIA as the difference of opinion could not be resolved without the use of a more informative Visual Representation of Development Proposals.
- 6.67. A secondary issue is the use of annotated photographs showing baseline conditions only in full summer. This is relevant as it does not allow for the accurate assessment of

likely effects on Visual Amenity in winter, with least leaf cover and therefore minimum screening.

- 6.68. The GLVIA 3 Para 6.28 (CD7.5) states clearly that consideration should be given to these seasonal changes, and that best practice should be to determine whether the emphasis should be only on worst-case, winter conditions, or whether both winter and summer conditions should be used.
- 6.69. Whilst it is always reasonable to allow for the limitations of the timing of the assessment, in the particular case of this Inquiry, a number of years have passed since the original application, which would have allowed for additional field work to be undertaken. At the time this appeal was validated, photography could still have been taken which would have shown Winter conditions
- 6.70. In the absence of both winter views, and Visualisations showing the likely effects on visual amenity of the proposals, it is difficult to accept the assessment in the LVIA of the appellant.

### **Significance of Visual Effects**

- 6.71. In drawing a final conclusion on the significance of the likely Visual Effects, I am combining the separate judgements on the Visual Receptor's sensitivity, and the magnitude of visual effects as a result of the proposed development.
- 6.72. The submitted LVIA document concluded that the impact on all identified Visual Receptors ranged from Negligible or Minor Adverse in most instances, to Moderate Adverse in the case of receptors on Carr Rd and Hollin Busk Lane. This would reduce over time as landscape mitigation matures.
- 6.73. In my own professional judgement, and for the reasons outlined previously, the proposal is likely to result in an overall Major Adverse Visual Impact to visual receptors nearest the site, in particular those from the south of the site, and a large number of additional receptors to the north would experience moderate adverse effects.
- 6.74. As stated in the Reason for Refusal, therefore, *'The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed development would result in unreasonable harm... to visual amenity at both local and wider levels, creating unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside'*.

**Issue 3 : the role of the site in visually separating settlements and whether the proposals undermine this role.**

- 6.75. It is a matter of fact that the site is currently designated an Open Space Area under the Sheffield UDP (CD 3.5). This creates a green wedge that extends continuously from the Green Belt, encompasses Fox Glen, and runs to the valley bottom.
- 6.76. The green wedge is clearly visible from the north side of the valley, as well as the Green Belt to the south of the site. It is an integral and valued element of the natural environment and wider rural landscape character of the southern fringe of Deepcar. From these areas, there is no visual break between the site and the adjoining areas of Green Belt that go to make up the Upland Landscape Character type of Pastoral Hills and Ridges.
- 6.77. This Character type is defined by wide, open views, occasional buildings. The site itself exhibits these landscape elements clearly, and affords open views to Hunshelf Bank to the north, and the Peak District National Park to the south
- 6.78. Furthermore, the applicant chose to illustrate the site as clearly visible from the north and south as shown in the submitted Design and Access Statement (CD 1.10). Page 17 shows aerial photography which highlights the very green open nature of the site as an area of countryside, indistinguishable from the adjacent Green Belt land, and as very obvious separation between Deepcar and Stocksbridge.
- 6.79. As set out in NPPF Paragraph 170 b), (CD 4.1) development should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. Paragraphs 127 (c) also requires development to be sympathetic to local character including its landscape setting.
- 6.80. Should the development go ahead as proposed and set out in the submitted Parameter plans, this area of Open Space would be replaced by medium to high density housing, which will not enhance the natural environment, or be sympathetic to the landscape setting.
- 6.81. UDP policy LR5 'Development in Open Space Areas' states that development will not be permitted where *"it would result in over-development or harm the character of an area; or it would harm the rural character of a wedge of open countryside, "*
- 6.82. The development of the site for housing would result in the existing openness of the site being irretrievably lost. The function of the site and the adjoining Green Belt, as a



wedge of open countryside would be significantly harmed. The landscape and natural environment would not be conserved or enhanced contrary to UDP Policy GE4 which(CD 3.2a) requires the scale and character of development within or conspicuous from the green belt to be in keeping and where possible conserve and enhance the landscape and natural environment

6.83. The objectives of GE4 closely align with Paragraph 141 which encourages LPA's, amongst other things to *'retain and enhance landscape, visual amenity and biodiversity of the green belt'*,

6.84. For this reason *'The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposed development would create unacceptable impacts on the character of the area and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, while also undermining the role of the site in visually separating established settlements.'*

## **7. Summary and Conclusion**

7.1. Through a detailed objective analysis of the existing landscape elements and features of the site, I have established that the site is a landscape of High Value, something which is not acknowledged by the Appellant

7.2. Through my own assessment, I have concluded that the development as defined within the parameters plans would result in significant harm to the existing landscape character of the site, and the adjoining Green Belt, as well as damaging the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. This runs contrary to the national Planning Policy Framework, as well as Policies within the Sheffield UDP.

7.3. The areas from which the proposals would affect visual amenity have not been correctly identified in documents submitted to date, meaning the overall scale of harm to visual receptors has equally been understated by the Appellant.

7.4. It is my professional judgement that the likely visual effects would range from Major to Moderate Adverse, resulting in unreasonable harm to visual amenity at both local and wider levels. As such, it would severely impact the openness of the Green Belt and undermine the role of the site in visually separating established settlements, permanently harming the visual separation between Deepcar and Stocksbridge.

7.5. In conclusion, I support the Landscape and Visual Amenity related reasons put forward by Sheffield City Council in refusing the application.

## **APPENDICES**

# **APPENDIX A - Site Photographs**



Photo 1 - looking North from Huntshelf Bank, the site is located centrally, visually contiguous with the adjacent Green Belt land. The Peak District sits in the background



Photo 2 - looking west across the site





Photo 3 - looking north-east accross the site, Fox Glenn is in the middle distance



Photo 4 - looking North accross the site from Fox Glenn footpaths





# APPENDIX B - Additional Visual Receptors

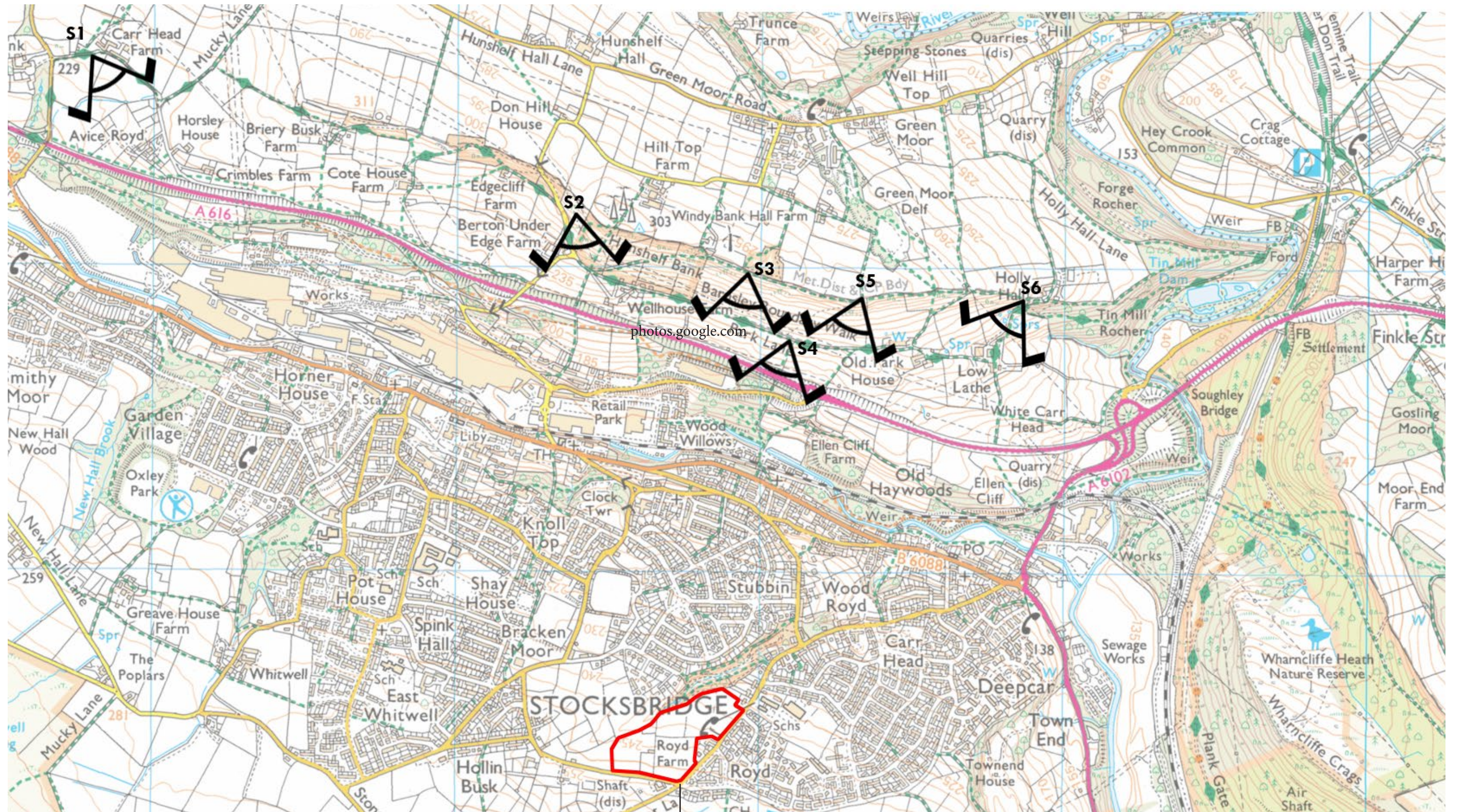
All the photographs shown in this Appendix were taken using a Nikon Fixed Frame Sensor Camera, with a 50mm Focal Length Prime lens, as stipulated in the Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note 06/19 "Visual Representation of Development Proposals". (CD 7.6)

The significance of this methodology is that it will give a reasonably realistic view of how the landscape will appear when the image is reproduced at A3 size and held at arms length.



# VIEW LOCATION PLAN

Additional views taken outside the suggested RVE by the Appellant



Proposed  
Development Site



# VIEW S1

From PROW at Carr Head Farm

Proposed Development Site



Date taken : 23rd May 2021

To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



# VIEW S2

From Access Land on Huntshelf Bank



Date taken : 23rd May 2021

To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



# VIEW S3

From Isle of Skye Panoramic Viewpoint



Date taken : 23rd May 2021

To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



# VIEW S4

From PROW Barnsley Round Walk

Proposed Development Site

Cockshot Lane



Date taken : 23rd May 2021

To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



# VIEW S5

From PROW on Huntshelf Bank

Proposed Development Site

Cockshot Lane

Hollin Busk Lane

Peak District National Park



Date taken : 23rd May 2021

To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



# VIEW S6

From PROW above Lathe

Proposed Development Site

Green Belt

Hollin Busk Lane



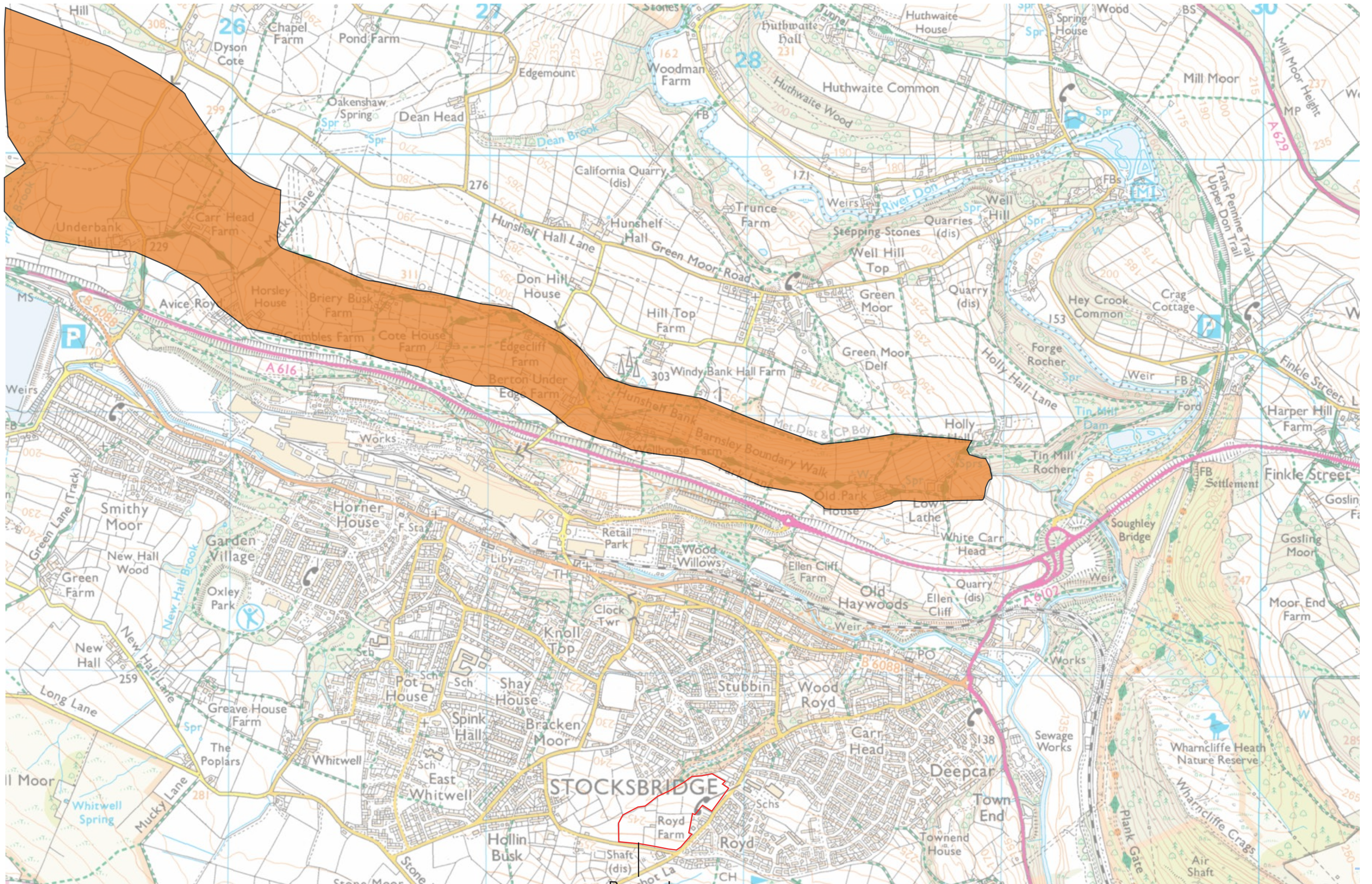
Date taken : 23rd May 2021

To be viewed at comfortable arm's length



# **APPENDIX C - Amended Representative Visual Envelope**





Proposed  
Development Site