

# **LANDSCAPE & VISUAL ASSESSMENT**

## **Proposed redevelopment at Stanley House Hotel and Spa**

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 DEP Landscape Architecture have been commissioned by Monte Leisure to produce a Landscape and Visual Assessment for a proposed new planning application for the redevelopment of Stanley House Hotel and Spa.
- 1.2 The proposed development looks to expand the existing hotel facilities to provide additional bedrooms, banqueting facilities, first class spa and improved site infrastructure in response to market changes in the hospitality sector and to support the necessary growth required to make the hotel a financial success. An application for the expansion of the hotel was approved back in 2009, this was part implemented in 2010 with the construction of the bedroom/spa block to the east of Stanley House and various extensions to the barn and entrance buildings. The remainder of the approved application has not been implemented.
- 1.3 The new 2020 planning application in which the landscape and visual impacts assessment have been based upon has been developed by the new owners Monte Leisure and architects Campbell Driver. The proposals represent an increase in footprint from the original approved 2009 proposals, however this new development aims to offer significant gain (than the previously approved application) to the historic setting of Stanley House by re-organising the layout and scale of that previously approved. It also looks to provide a much improved arrangement of facilities to attract new clients and from an operations point of view.
- 1.4 The Landscape and Visual Assessment looks to assess the potential landscape and visual impacts of this proposed development in its current landscape context and taking into consideration the previously approved 2009 application. This assessment will also look to provide mitigation measures to ensure that the proposals offer significant gain to the historic setting of Stanley House and its parkland/ agricultural setting within the wider landscape and help integrate the development into the landscape.
- 1.5 The Figures and photographs, which are referred throughout this document, are appended at the back in appendix 2.0 and should be read in conjunction with the assessment.

## 2.0 Methodology

- 2.1 The assessment has been undertaken by Mrs Emma Podmore BSc (Dual Hons) following best practice guidance in accordance with Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment' - Landscape Institute & the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment 2013 (Third edition).
- 2.2 Although not intended to be a fully technical Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, this report echoes the methodology outlined within this guidance to provide a comprehensive baseline assessment of the site and wider landscape to help make an informed assessment of the potential impact that the proposed development may present to Green Belt and Open Countryside in which it is located.
- 2.3 For a full description of the methodology used in the production of this document and presentation of the photographs please refer to appendix 1.0 at the back of this report.

## 3.0 Site Location and Context

- 3.1 The site is located near Mellor, Lancashire approximately 3 miles north west from the centre of Blackburn and seven miles east from the centre of Preston. It is accessed from Further Lane, just off the A677 Preston New Road. A sweeping private driveway provides access into the main body of the site, please refer to figure 1 in the appendix for the site location plan.

- 3.2 The site comprises the main hotel building, Stanley House, spa and bedroom blocks and wider grounds associated with the hotel complex. It is located at an elevated position on the top of a hillside at 146m above sea level (ASL). Stanley house itself sits within the middle of the site and is a historic grade II listed building. The hotel is surrounded by farmland and woodland.
- 3.3 To the north, over the A677 Preston New Road lies the village of Mellor. This settlement sits at approximately 180m ASL, below Mellor Moor. Because of its elevated position there are views from the southern edge of Mellor looking south towards the site. The landscape here comprises open farmland and scattered trees and vegetation.
- 3.4 To the south of the site the landscape sharply falls towards Arley Brook which lies at 100m ASL within a wooded meandering river valley. Trees and woodland have established on this south facing embankment which forms part of the wider extents of Woodfold Park grade II listed park and gardens. Woodfold Park is a large landscaped private county house park around Woodfold Hall which comprises a mixture of woodland and farmland. Views of the hotel from the south are limited to those immediately on the northern boundary of the wood. There is public footpath which follows the northern extents of this woodland and then drops down into Arley Brook.
- 3.5 To the east this woodland embankment wraps around the wider eastern site boundary of the site up to Preston New Road and around Mellor Lodge which forms the entrance to Woodfold Park. Beyond, the landscape comprises open farmland and scattered trees and vegetation before it reaches the A6119 and the edge of Blackburn.
- 3.6 To the west the landscape is more open in character and gently slopes down from the site to 130 and 115m ASL. It comprises open farmland and occasional scattered trees along field boundaries. There is a public footpath within the site which follows the site access road as it wraps around the hotel complex to the west and then follows the route of the old access road down to Preston New Road. Please refer to Figures 2-4 in the appendix for the pictures of the wider site context as described above.

#### 4.0 Site Description and History

- 4.1 The site comprises an existing hotel complex which sits on a localised hillside within an undulating landscape at 146m ASL. The hotel complex comprises the house and grounds of an old manor house called Stanley House with a modern day barn conversion, bedroom/ spa block, ancillary buildings and associated infrastructure and car parking facilities.
- 4.2 Stanley House is a grade II listed sandstone house which was built in 1640 for the Stanley family as the manor house of Mellor. It was later used as farmhouse and associated agricultural buildings were added to the site following the purchase of the house by Henry Sudell in 1788. The house later fell into disrepair and by 1877 was recorded as being in a poor state. The property and estate were brought back into use and converted to the hotel in 2004.
- 4.3 The house was originally surrounded by pockets of woodland immediately north, west and east of the house and south of the barn, the estate was surrounded by agricultural fields with boundary hedgerows and trees.
- 4.4 The original driveway to Stanley House came from the south which explains why the southern elevation of Stanley House forms the principal elevation. By 1848 as Woodfold Park (now a Grade II listed Park and Garden) was being created to the south of the site, a new access road was provided from the north and followed the route of the public footpath which still exists today which leads down from the hotel to Preston New Road. Remnants of the old gates and wall remain but this access no longer forms the main vehicular route into the hotel which is now located to the west off Further Lane.

4.5 In summary the hotel as it stands today includes the listed Stanley House and formal garden to the south (of the house) which is framed to the east by a large L shaped bedroom and spa block, built as part of the approved 2009 application. To the west is the main reception/ hotel complex and banqueting rooms which comprise of the much-extended original agricultural barns when it was first converted to a hotel in 2004. The main 'front of house' and formal parking areas are located to the south of the hotel surrounded by areas of lawn and trees. The northern end of the site feels more 'back of house' and includes additional areas of parking and service areas for the hotel and staff. Please refer to Figure 5 in the Appendix.

4.6 Apart from the more formal landscaped gardens immediately adjacent to the hotel and the ornamental pond to the east, the remainder of the site is laid to lawn with established hedgerows around the main buildings and areas of tree planting around the southern and eastern site boundaries. The site is more open to the west and north apart from a few localised clumps of tree planting on the embankment. This combined with the local topography offers long distance views out towards the wider landscape from these elevations.

## 5.0 Development Proposals and Planning History

5.1 The original approved planning application in 2009 was developed in consultation with the Local Authority and English Heritage and sought to increase the footprint of the site considerably to create a sustainable hotel development. Please refer to Figure 6 in the Appendix. The bedroom and spa building to the east and various extensions to the main hotel to the west were implemented following the approval but the remainder of the works which includes proposed extended parking areas to the west and north and the large spa building/ brassiere/ bedroom wing to the north were never constructed.

5.2 The proposed development looks to retain the key elements of the original proposals that were never implemented, but the positioning and scale of the buildings has changed. Notably the additional bedroom block is proposed to be relocated to the south of the L shaped bedroom block and takes away some massing of the new built form from the listed Manor House to help improve its setting. Please refer to Figure 7 in the Appendix.

5.3 A banqueting hall has been proposed to the west of the main hotel with a contemporary enclosed walled garden. The new spa facilities are to be retained as originally proposed to the north of the main hotel, albeit the proposed design and form of the architecture for this building has changed.

5.4 The locations and capacity of the proposed extended car parking facilities has been altered. Areas of parking have now been proposed immediately adjacent to the new spa and leisure complex so that this can be managed independently of the hotel. An increased capacity of permanent and overflow parking has also been allocated to the southern end of the site to allow the hotel the option to cater for larger events.

5.5 The extended access road remains as the previously approved development and circulates wide around the western perimeter of the site with areas of landscape and tree planting within and around the site boundaries to sympathetically integrate the new development back into the landscape.

### **Approved Planning Application 2009**

5.6 The original 2008 planning application for the hotel expansion was approved in 2009 planning reference 3/2008/0548 and listed building consent was granted in 2008 planning reference 3/2008/0547.

5.7 Ribble Valley Borough Council and English Heritage were consulted during the original 2009 approved application and throughout the pre-application of these new development proposals. The consultees responses for the 2009 development (document reference - Recommendation of Planning and Development Committee JM/CMS dated 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009) made the following comments in relation to heritage, planning policy, and landscape;

5.8 The report stated that "*the design of the building and use of appropriate materials has resulted in a scheme that complements the new building without competing with it. The alterations and extensions are sited in locations to allow relatively uninterrupted views of Stanley House and also utilises the land and levels to maximise the size of the development and minimise visual impact*". English Heritage supported the proposed scheme on the grounds that "*the proposed development would secure the continuation of the viable and sympathetic re-use of Stanley House*".

5.9 In relation to visual impact the committee report stated that "*the proposal has been designed to minimise both the impact the development would have on the listed building and the local environment. As already indicated the alterations and extensions are sited in areas that have limited views and a topography that helps to screen the bulk of the buildings*".

5.10 The committee report highlights the fact that the site falls within Green Belt and does present a significant increase in floor space. However, the officer concludes that he "*accepts that the scheme would impinge on the openness of Green Belt but a balance needs to be made against other material considerations which in this instance I consider make the scheme acceptable*".

5.11 In the Summary of Reasons for Approval the officer concludes that "*The proposal has no significant detrimental impact on the nearby residential amenity nor would it have an adverse visual impact*". The scheme was recommended for approval and was granted in 2009.

#### Pre-Application Advice 2020

5.12 Extensive pre-application discussions with Ribble Valley Borough Council and English Heritage has looked to help inform the redesign of the hotel expansion to ensure it does not have any impact on the listed building Stanley House and its setting. The new development would increase the footprint of the built form but as highlighted in the pre-application Heritage Statement produced by Hinchcliffe Heritage "*the development would reduce its intensity (to the 2009 approved application) and would allow the principal elevation of the listed building to be viewed without any physical accretions to either side*".

5.13 Historic England have provided a pre-application response to the proposed application (letter reference PA01117145 dated 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020) and have raised no objections to the proposed development. They have accepted that a hotel is still considered to be an appropriate use for the site and for the future preservation of Stanley House. Historic England have suggested "*the proposed development would have a greater impact on the wider environment due to the increase in building footprint but would have a better/ lesser impact on the immediate setting and on the listed building its self*" as opposed to the previously approved application.

5.14 Any potential visual and landscape impacts have looked to be avoided through the careful placement of the buildings and reorganisation of the car park provision concentrating more of the parking to the southern end of the hotel rather than the more sensitive western elevation. The revised layout also provides the opportunity to improve the proposed landscape infrastructure within and around the site to help break up the parking provision and further reduce any potential visual impacts of the development itself.

## 6.0 Planning Policy

- 6.1 The site falls within the jurisdiction of Ribble Valley Borough Council. Ribble Valley District Wide Local Plan which provides the most current planning policy guidelines for this area was adopted in June 1998. For the purposes of this assessment only the planning policies in relation to landscape will be examined, please refer to the Planning Statement for a more comprehensive review of the relevant planning policies which relate to this application.
- 6.2 As illustrated on Figure 8 in the Appendix the site lies within Open Countryside and Green Belt. To the south of the site the wooded embankment and associated farmland are designated as an Historic Park and Garden which comprises the extent of Woodfold Park which is a grade II listed Park and Garden. Within Woodfold Park there are several listed buildings and structures associated with this 18<sup>th</sup> century country Estate established around Woodfold Hall. Stanley House within the site is a grade II listed building as are several smaller farmhouses and cottages within the wider surrounding landscape.
- 6.3 The relevant statements within the planning policy guidelines which will be reviewed as part of this assessment have been highlighted below;

### **ENV3 Open Countryside**

- 6.4 The following planning policy relates to Open Countryside as highlighted on the Local Plan Map. Policy ENV3 of Ribble Valley District Wide Local Plan states the following with regards permitted development and the protection of Open Countryside;

**In the open countryside outside the AONB and areas immediately adjacent to it, development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape area and should reflect local vernacular, scale, style, features and building materials. Proposals to conserve, renew and enhance landscape features, will be permitted, providing regard has been given for the characteristic landscape features of the area.**

*Although the Bowland area has received national recognition the adjacent area of countryside is also of high quality, in places matching that of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This policy recognises that the open countryside is all worthy of conservation and enhancement.*

*The detailed landscape assessment included in Appendix 2 will be used in the determination of any planning application. Whilst the Borough Council has no wish to unnecessarily restrict development it is essential that **only development which has benefits to the area is allowed**. Even when such development is accepted it must acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting.*

*The Council will ensure the protection and enhancement of those areas outside both the AONB and areas immediately adjacent to it with an approach to conservation which gives a **high priority to the protection and conservation of natural habitats and traditional landscape features**. It will protect statutory designated areas and sites of biological interest and ancient woodland sites throughout open countryside areas. **It will continue to improve the extent and quality of the tree cover and associated flora/fauna throughout the open countryside**. It will determine and identify landscape character in relationship to the future landscape potential and will act to **enhance landscape character of the open countryside**.*

*The Borough Council is also committed to protecting key elements of the landscape character of any site affected by proposed development and would **make the siting, scale and form of any landscape proposal that forms part of any planning application a priority**.*

*Open recreational uses will be assessed in terms of their impact on the site and on the wider value of the landscape, together with any social benefits arising.*

#### **ENV4 Green Belt**

6.5 The following planning policy relates to Green Belt as highlighted on the Local Plan Map. Policy ENV4 of Ribble Valley District Wide Local Plan states the following with regards permitted development and the protection of Green Belt;

**Within the green belt, as shown on the proposals map, planning permission will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the erection of new buildings other than for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation, cemeteries and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of the green belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of the designation.**

**Proposals for the change of use of existing buildings other than for the purposes outlined above will be determined subject to Policies H15, H16, H17, EMP9 and RT3 of this plan.**

*The designation of green belt is a well-established planning policy. Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 is specifically related to green belts. This lists 4 main functions of the green belt:*

- to safeguard the surrounding countryside from further encroachment;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to preserve the special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration.

**The essential characteristic of the green belt is seen as its permanence.** Government guidance calls for their protection to be maintained as far as can be seen ahead. The longevity of the designation was an important consideration in the preparation of the Southern Fringe Local Plan, which originally defined the bulk of the green belt in the Borough. This stressed that the designation would not be altered until at least the turn of the century.

*In preparing this plan, boundaries have been reviewed on the basis of no, or only limited change. Where slight boundary modifications have occurred, this is in response to exceptional circumstances. The green belt boundary in this plan will be maintained beyond the timescale of this document.*

*The identification of the green belt set out in this plan will help to achieve the strategic aims of the structure plan. Indeed, it is the structure plan which draws the broad extent of the designation. There is a real danger of villages which currently enjoy an individual character, for instance Mellor and Mellor Brook merging together. This may lead to a loss of community identity and damage to the attractive setting many villages currently enjoy. Particular dangers exist of the urban area of Blackburn extending to take in Langho and Mellor, and that of Great Harwood extending towards Whalley/Billington and Read. It is also important to*

*ensure that the villages of Wilpshire, Langho and Billington do not merge to form continuous urban development along the A666.*

*Proposals for conversion of rural buildings will be determined on the basis of policies H15 and H16 and H17 in respect of residential uses, policy EMP9 for employment generating uses and RT3 for tourism uses. In assessing residential applications the need to accommodate local commerce and industry may well be a material consideration in determining applications. In addition, the location of residential conversions will also be an important factor, with strict controls over proposals in the open countryside.*

*It is equally important that even in the case of land uses held to be acceptable in a green belt, that development takes full account of the sensitivity of the site and does not damage any of the main functions of the designation.*

*The only exceptions to this policy are developments which show overwhelming reasons of local need. Such reasons will include developments essential to provide or improve essential local services where these cannot be met elsewhere in more suitable locations.*

### **ENV21 Historic Park and Gardens**

6.6 The following planning policy relates to Historic Parks and Gardens as highlighted on the Local Plan Map. Policy ENV21 of Ribble Valley District Wide Local Plan states the following with regards permitted development and the protection of Historic Parks and Gardens;

**Development proposals affecting a historic park or garden and its setting will be strictly controlled to ensure they do not harm the appearance or function of the area. Proposals will be assessed in terms of scale, size, design and materials.**

There are currently three sites in the Borough contained in the English Heritage Register of historic parks and gardens of special historic interest in England, one of which includes Woodfold Park which lies to the south of the site.

### **Listed Buildings**

6.7 The following planning policies relate to Listed Buildings within the local borough. The locations of these buildings and structures has been highlighted on Figure 8 and the information taken from Historic England website. The following policies with regards listed buildings within the Local Plan are listed below;

*The Borough Council will have special regard to the desirability of securing the retention, repair, maintenance and continued use of buildings of special architectural or historic interest. Listed buildings are statutorily designated by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in recognition of their special architectural or historic interest. The buildings are classified in grades to show their relative importance, the grades are:*

*Grade 1 - Buildings of exceptional interest whose preservation is in the national interest;*

*Grade II\* - Particularly important buildings within grade II;*

*Grade II - Buildings of special interest, which warrant every effort being made to preserve them.*

*Listed buildings are largely classified as a reflection of their architectural importance. In addition, buildings and structures of any period which are particularly important illustrations of social economic history, for example, almshouses, schools, stations or buildings which show virtuosity or are associated with well-known characters or events are normally regarded as listworthy.*

*There are 1019 listed buildings in the Borough. 18 are classed as Grade I, 57 are Grade II\* and 944 are Grade II.*

*It is important that the listed buildings of the Borough are retained. The condition and state of repair are important considerations which also warrant protection. Grant aid is available from the Council to ensure that these buildings are properly maintained. **An unsympathetic development adjacent to a listed building can have severely harmful effects.** The following policies protect both listed buildings and their settings;*

#### ENV19

6.8 **Development proposals on sites within the setting of buildings listed as being of special architectural or historic interest which cause visual harm to the setting of the building will be resisted. In assessing the harm caused by any proposal the following factors will be taken into account:**

- i) The desirability of preserving the setting of the building
- ii) The effect of the proposed development on the character of the listed building
- iii) Any effect on the economic viability of the listed building
- iv) The contribution which the listed building makes to the townscape or countryside
- v) The extent to which the proposed works would bring substantial benefits to the community including economic benefits and enhancement of the environment.

*The setting may be limited to ancillary land, but may often include land some distance away from it. The setting may encompass a number of other properties. The setting of an individual listed building very often owes its character to the harmony produced by a particular grouping of buildings and to the quality of the spaces created between them. While a listed building forms an important visual element in a street, it would be correct to regard any development in the street as being within the setting of the building. In some cases, setting can only be defined by a historical assessment of a building's surroundings.*

#### Other Planning Considerations

6.9 There are several trees within the site which are protected by a Tree Preservation Order, reference TPO 3: 1988 Stanley House, off Preston Road, Mellor. In addition, there are several specimens and groups of trees around the site which also contribute to the setting and character of the site and wider landscape. They help screen and filter views of the built form and are an important assess to the site and future development. Their importance will be considered as part of the development proposals and within the landscape and visual assessment. A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impacts Assessment will form part of the detailed planning submission. The potential impact of the development on the tree population will be discussed further within this assessment.

6.10 There are several public footpaths in the wider landscape which have views directed towards the site. There is one path which follows the route of the old access off Preston New Road (opposite Mire Ash Brow) and continues onto the current private access road around the western site boundary before tracking south west over into the neighbouring field.

6.11 A section of this footpath will have to be diverted to accommodate the new road alignment as it wraps around the western boundary of the proposed extended site. This footpath diversion has already been accepted by the Local Authority within the 2009 planning application. The magnitude of change that the user of this footpath and those in the wider landscape would experience as a result of the proposed development will be considered within this landscape and visual assessment and appropriate mitigation measures proposed.

## 7.0 Planning Policy Appraisal

7.0 The proposed development looks to retain the key elements of the original proposals, albeit the positions and scale of the buildings has been modified and the extent and location of car parking has changed. However, the principle of the development remains the same in that they comprise proposed development needed to ensure that the hotel can remain a viable business for the future and responds to the current market changes and demands.

7.1 As with any development within Green Belt it would present a physical impact on the 'openness' of Green Belt as it requires the development of land within areas that are currently free from built form. The committee report from the 2009 approved application does acknowledge this and the officer states that he "*accepts that the scheme would impinge on the openness of Green Belt but a balance needs to be made against other material considerations which in this instance I consider makes the scheme acceptable*".

7.2 The site sits within an isolated and elevated position within Green Belt and is surrounded by farmland and woodland away from the main settlement boundaries of Blackburn, Mellor and Mellor Brook. Development would comprise the expansion of an existing established hotel which would not be out of character with the existing site and would be limited in terms of its visual impacts. This would help to ensure that the main purposes of Green Belt and the reasons for including land (and this site) are still maintained.

7.3 Following an assessment of the potential effects of the proposed development on the baseline character this assessment will aim to propose mitigation measures to improve and enhance the landscape character and setting of the development site as a whole. The existing trees will be retained where possible and tree cover across the site would be enhanced to help further integrate the site into its landscape setting. These in turn will help to address the planning requirements set out within Open Countryside and Green Belt policies.

7.4 Historic England have made no objections to the proposed development in relation to the protection of Stanley House and its immediate setting. Historic England and Ribble Valley Borough Council both approved the previous 2009 development scheme which proposed a more intrusive arrangement of built form to the west of the house with a connecting corridor between the two. Historic England have agreed within their pre-application advice that the 2020 proposed development would have a better (lesser) impact on its immediate setting and on the listed building itself. Therefore, the proposed development looks to accord with the planning policy in relation to listed buildings.

## 8.0 Baseline Landscape Character

8.1 DEP undertook an independent desk top study, site visit and site-specific assessment to prepare the Landscape and Visual Assessment. This information was used to determine the extent of the study area which was considered appropriate to be set at 1km radius from the site. Please refer to Figure 1 in the appendix. It acknowledges because of the elevated nature of the site there are potentially some long distance views of the site from the wider landscape beyond 1km and this has been discussed further with the visual assessment.

8.2 Published Character Assessments, Ordnance Survey mapping information, Google Maps, photographs, and information recorded during the site visit were used to build the baseline description for the landscape character of the site and wider landscape.

### **National Character Area Classification**

8.3 The site lies within **National Character Area profile 35: Lancashire Valleys**. This runs north-east from Chorley through Blackburn and Burnley to Colne. The National Character Area (NCA) as described lies mainly in east Lancashire and is bounded to the north-west by the Bowland Fells fringe and the Millstone Grit outcrop of Pendle Hill, and to the south by the Southern Pennines. The Lancashire Valleys broadly consist of the wide vale of the rivers Ribble and Calder and their tributaries. This visually contained landscape has a strong urban character.

8.4 In summary the following descriptions from NCA 35 which are relevant descriptions of the site and local landscape have been extracted below;

- *Broad valleys of the rivers Calder and Ribble and their tributaries run northeast to south-west between the uplands of Pendle Hill and the Southern Pennines.*
- *A Millstone Grit ridge extends between the Ribble and Calder catchments (including the Mellor Ridge and part of Pendle Hill).*
- *Field boundaries are regular to the west. They are formed by hedges with few hedgerow trees and by stone walls and post and-wire fences at higher elevations.*
- *Agricultural land is fragmented by towns, villages and hamlets, industry and scattered development, with pockets of farmed land limited to along the Ribble Valley, the fringes of Pendle Hill, the area to the west of Blackburn, and in the north around Skipton.*
- *Farmed land is predominantly pasture for grazing livestock, with areas of acid and neutral grassland, flushes and mires. There is some upland heath and rough pasture on Pendle Hill and the higher land to the south.*
- *Small, often ancient, broadleaved woodlands of oak, alder and sycamore extend along narrow, steep-sided cloughs on the valley sides.*
- *There are numerous large country houses with associated parklands, particularly on the northern valley sides away from major urban areas.*

- *The many towns, including Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley, which developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution give the area a strong urban character.*

### Local Character Area Classification

8.5 A local landscape character assessment has been carried out by Lancashire County Council which was published in December 2000. This provided a Landscape Strategy for Lancashire and divides the landscape up into 21 different character types which were further subdivided into more localised landscape character areas to reflect local landscape characteristics. A map of the character areas of Lancashire and the site location within this has been illustrated on figure 8 in the appendix. The site and wider landscape falls within the character area described as **5 Undulating Lowland Farmland** and more specifically **5d Salmesbury-Withnell Fold**. Please refer to Figure 9 in the appendix.

8.6 In summary the following descriptions from 5:Undulating Lowland Farmland which are relevant descriptions of the site and local landscape have been extracted below;

- *Generally below 150m, the Undulating Lowland Farmland lies between the major valleys and the moorland fringes. Hedgerows predominate over stone walls.*
- *This lowland landscape is traversed by deeply incised, wooded cloughs and gorges.*
- *There are also many mixed farm woodlands, copses and hedgerow trees, creating an impression of a well wooded landscape from ground level and a patchwork of wood and pasture from raised viewpoints on the fells.*
- *The area also has many country houses whose boundary walls and designed landscapes add to the species diversity and visual appeal.*
- *There is a high density of farms and scattered cottages outside the clustered settlements, linked by a network of minor roads.*

### 5d Salmesbury-Withnell Fold

8.7 The more local landscape character area classification has been described as 5d Salmesbury-Withnell Fold and includes the areas of landscape around the site and those extending down to the south and west. It has been described as follows;

- *An area between the Ribble Valley to the north and the Industrial Foothills to the south. Provides a gently undulating landscape of large lush green pastures divided by low cut hedgerows and hedgerow trees.*
- *Dramatic steep sided wooded valleys wind their way through the landscape carrying the River Darwen and its tributaries.*
- *Designed landscapes and parkland associated with Samlesbury Hall, Woodfold Hall, Pleasington Old Hall and Hoghton Tower add to the overall woodland cover in this lowland landscape and Witton Country Park provides a countryside resource on the edge of Blackburn.*

- *It is also influenced by infrastructure (major road and rail routes), industrial works, the airfield at Samlesbury and built development on the edges of Preston.*

## 9.0 Local Landscape Character

9.1 Whilst the published National and Local Landscape character descriptions help provide an accurate description of the baseline local landscape character and highlight the key important characteristics it is also important to get a more site specific understanding of the local landscape character. The local landscape character assessment alongside the baseline descriptions from the published landscape assessments will help establish the quality and value of the landscape(s) and their sensitivity to change. This information has been collected following a site visit and desk top study. Photographs taken from around the site have been illustrated on Figures 2-4 to best demonstrate the local landscape character described below.

9.2 The site is located on the top of a hill within an undulating landscape comprising farmland which is mainly grazing land with a combination of hedgerows and fencing to field boundaries. There are scattered trees and pockets of woodland within the landscape which have established either along field boundaries, river embankments or the steeper sloping hillsides. The settlements of Mellor and Mellor Brook are the nearest villages to the site and are visible within the landscape due to the elevated and undulating landform. The houses on the south and western edge of Mellor are particularly prominent. The landscape is accessible through a network of roads, country lanes and footpaths. The largest road being the A677 Preston New Road which cuts through the study area and links between Blackburn and Preston. There is a network of country lanes which provide access to the surrounding villages and hamlets and a series of public footpaths. The undulating landform and the opportunities for long distance views from the more elevated positions makes this landscape feel quite open.

9.3 For the purposes of the landscape character assessment the study area has been divided up into two distinct character types which includes the surrounding areas of settlement and the open countryside (in which the site is located), within these areas important characteristic features have been identified and described. Please refer to Figure 10 in the appendix. The site itself has been appraised separately for comparison;

### **Settlement**

9.4 Areas of settlement includes Mellor and Mellor Brook which are small village settlements and have been illustrated on Figure 10 in the appendix. The larger conurbations of Blackburn and Preston fall outside of the wider study area but the edges of these settlements lie less than one mile from the site to the east and five miles to the west and are connected by the A677 Preston New Road which travels past the site.

9.5 Mellor and Mellor Brook comprises a mixture of more traditional stone-built houses and cottages found along the main access roads interspersed and extended with more modern style family homes where the villages have expanded in the more recent past.

9.6 As is the nature of built form views from within these settlements are largely contained. However, on the edges of these settlements and in particular on the western and southern edge of Mellor there are extensive views out across into the wider landscape.

9.7 Where there are views over the wider surrounding countryside there are also of the scattered dwellings and neighbouring settlements. There are views of the site from the edge of Mellor

as the site sits in an elevated position. In the far distance beyond the site there are views towards the coastline and the wider conurbations on the lower lying areas.

9.8 The landscape quality for the areas described as Settlement has been assessed as ordinary as Mellor and Mellor Brook are typical of the local villages found within this landscape. They are well maintained and provide a pleasant place to live but apart from a few localised listed buildings or the more traditional stone houses these villages are not particularly distinct nor have they been recognised for their quality or character, i.e. these are not conservation areas. Its value has been assessed as low/moderate, therefore the sensitivity of the surrounding areas of settlement has been assessed as low and is considered tolerant of change.

### **Countryside**

9.9 The open countryside has been illustrated on Figure 10 within the appendix. This covers the wider landscape found around the site and between areas of settlement which include Mellor and Mellor Brook to the north east and north west of the study area.

9.10 The landscape is gently undulating with some localised highpoints which include the site at 146m ASL and Mellor at 180m ASL. The landscape in the main comprises pasture with some occasional rough grassland which can be seen on the steeper slopes to the north of the site. The fields are irregular in shape and are broken up with low cut field boundary hedges and post and wire fencing.

9.11 There are scattered mature trees, copses and irregular shaped areas of broad leaf woodlands which have established on the steeper sided slopes and along the river valleys. These provide a more wooded feel to the landscape from the lower elevations.

9.12 Within the countryside and outside of the main areas of settlement there are scattered dwellings found along the smaller country lanes, for example those found along Further lane to the north west of the site. These comprise in the main stone cottages or converted barns. There are also a number of large farmsteads within this area with large modern sheds and barn structures often associated with a more traditional smaller farmhouse.

9.13 There are numerous large country houses or estates within this area which includes Stanley House (in which the hotel has been established on) and Woodfold Hall. Woodfold Hall sits within a country estate called Woodfold Park which is a grade II listed park and garden. These old estates are often accessed by a long private driveway and are concealed in parts by surrounding mature trees and vegetation. Stone walls would have defined the boundaries of these estates, remnants of which can be seen around Woodfold Park and along the A677 Preston New Road on the north eastern boundary of Stanley House.

9.14 There are several buildings and structures which are listed within the landscape, this includes Stanley House and Woodfold Hall which have been identified on Figure 8 in the appendix.

9.15 The landscape is accessible by a network of country lanes and public footpaths which follow field boundary lines, linking the surrounding farmsteads and settlements. There are open views over the landscape from the local paths and some country lanes on the higher elevations which offer long distance views out towards the hills in the Forest of Bowland to the north east and the lower lying landscape towards the coastline to the west, north west.

9.16 The edges of settlement within the open countryside are quite prominent, particularly Mellor as its sits in an elevated position to the north of the site. The larger estates and scattered dwellings within the landscape are also visible when passing through the landscape with some

glimpsed views of the site, Stanley House Hotel and some of the large residential complexes which have been recently renovated off Further Lane.

9.17 The landscape quality for the area described as Countryside has been assessed as ordinary/good. The undulating landscape comprising grazing land and scattered trees and vegetation and does provide a sense of place, but this landscape has not been protected for its quality and more for its value as 'open countryside' between neighbouring settlements. It is widely used and viewed by the local community and provides a valuable resource but views of adjacent settlements and the busy A677 do detract from its value as opposed to the more remote countryside areas found within the Lancashire Valleys. The landscape value has therefore been assessed as moderate. The sensitivity of the character area has been assessed as medium and is reasonably tolerant of change.

### The Site

9.18 The site comprises an existing hotel complex which sits on the top of a localised hillside at 146m ASL. The wider site boundary extends down to the A677 Preston New Road to the north, the edge of Woodfold Park to the south and includes the immediate fields which surround the hotel complex itself. Pictures taken from around the site have been illustrated on Figures 11-13 within the appendix.

9.19 There is a long sweeping driveway which is accessed off Further Lane which provides access up into the site. The northern fields are steep and comprise rough grazing with scattered trees and vegetation. The obsolete site access off Preston New Road opposite Mire Ash Brow is now a public footpath and is slightly overgrown with vegetation and trees.

9.20 There are some old mature trees on the northern slopes leading up to the site and some boundary trees and hedgerow vegetation to the immediate boundaries around the hotel complex and car park. The south and eastern edge of the car park and hotel is well screened by a band of semi-mature trees and vegetation, however to the north of the hotel there are quite a few gaps in the more naturally colonised groups of trees and vegetation which allows into and out of the site. There is limited tree cover to the west of the hotel.

9.21 Stanley House is a grade II listed sandstone house which sits within the middle of the hotel complex, there is a large L shape bedroom and spa building to the east and the main hotel building which comprises the much extended original agricultural barns to the west. The main car parking areas are laid to tarmac to the south and to the north is the 'back of house' service areas for the hotel and staff parking.

9.22 The hotel buildings and listed house are in a good state of repair and prestigious in character. They include natural sandstone and slate roofs which are in keeping with the local vernacular. There are modern elements to the existing extensions to the hotel which include the use of brick, glass and timber but these have been sympathetically designed to complement the existing architecture and character.

9.23 The immediately landscape has been well maintained and the formal garden to the south of Stanley House provides an impressive setting to the southern façade of the listed building. The wider areas have been landscaped to blend back into the surrounding landscape and rural setting. There are perhaps more opportunities here for improvements to the landscape and visual amenity.

9.24 The landscape quality for 'The Site' has been assessed as ordinary. It sits within a landscape which has been described as ordinary/good however the hotel takes up an area of land within the countryside which comprises built form and hard landscape, this contrasts with its immediate surroundings. There are recognised valuable features which include the listed Stanley House and the rough grazing land and trees around the hotel all of which contribute

to the wider landscape character. The value of the landscape has been assessed as low/moderate. The manor house and associated estate (even though it has been developed into a hotel) is a characteristic feature within this landscape and does contribute to a sense of place within this area of landscape. The sensitivity of the site has been assessed as low.

## 10.0 Landscape Character Assessment

- 10.1 The proposed development looks to expand the existing hotel to accommodate additional buildings and facilities required to support a viable hotel business for the future. The existing hotel is already well established on this site and planning approval for a scheme proposed in 2009 has already been granted for a substantial hotel expansion of which only a small portion of the expansion proposals has been implemented.
- 10.2 The proposed development looks to retain the key elements of the original proposals, but the positioning and scale of the buildings has changed to take away some massing of the new buildings from Stanley House to improve its setting. The new spa facilities are retained as originally proposed to the north, albeit the proposed design and form of the architecture have changed. Car parking has been relocated and extended to provide dedicated parking for the new spa facilities to the north and extended parking areas to the south.
- 10.3 The magnitude of change that the proposed development would present on the character of the landscape types identified has been discussed below and the anticipated landscape effects assessed. Landscape mitigation will play a key role in helping to integrate the scheme into the surrounding landscape and has will be taken into consideration when looking at the landscape effects once implemented and established;
- 10.4 The magnitude of change for the landscape character area described as settlement has been assessed as negligible. The proposed development is physically separated from Mellor and Mellor Brook and the only effects that the development would present to these areas would be visual where there are views towards the site. This is discussed further within the visual assessment. The quality and value of these areas of settlement would not be impacted by the changes to the site and would not impact upon the character of these areas. The hotel is a small element in the wider landscape which surrounds these areas of settlement. The provision of a prestigious hotel business within the local area remains the same. The landscape effects on Settlement has therefore been assessed as negligible.
- 10.5 The magnitude of change for the landscape character area described as countryside has been assessed as low. There would an introduction of elements which maybe more prominent within the baseline character of the surrounding countryside but these would not be uncharacteristic of the existing hotel complex which is already well established here. There are already existing views of the hotel from the surrounding countryside and this is discussed further within the visual assessment. The existing trees would look to be retained where possible around the site and areas of grazing to the west, north and east would be retained. These would continue to contribute to the setting of the surrounding countryside with the new development providing further opportunities to enhance the existing landscape around the site and improve upon the arrangement and setting of the previous approved 2009 planning application. The landscape effects on Countryside has therefore been assessed as slight-moderate.
- 10.6 The magnitude of change for the site itself has been assessed as low/ negligible. There would be an alteration to the site as the hotel and car parking areas are expanded but the baseline character of the site would remain the same. It would continue to form the grounds of a large hotel complex surrounded by grazing land, scattered trees and vegetation. The quality and value of the site would remain the same and the landscape effects would be slight/ negligible.

10.7 As illustrated on table 1 below, the Landscape effects of the proposed development for Settlement have been assessed as negligible and for the Site itself, slight/ negligible. The development would not be out of character with the hotel which is already on the site. It would continue to present itself as a prestigious hotel complex within the setting of the listed building Stanley House and is surrounded by grazing land and scattered trees and vegetation.

10.8 As the surrounding countryside is more sensitive any changes to the site would present an effect, albeit these have only been assessed as slight-moderate as a result of the proposed development. The proposed hotel and associated works would present itself as a slight encroachment into the countryside, but this would not be out of character with what already exists and was also considered appropriate development within the 2009 planning approved. A benefit of this new application is that the development provides an opportunity to improve upon the setting of Stanley House and car parking arrangements than those previously approved for the 2009 application.

Landscape Types	Landscape quality	Landscape Value	Landscape Sensitivity	Magnitude of Change	Landscape Effects
Settlement	ordinary	low/ moderate	low	negligible	negligible
Countryside	ordinary/ good	moderate	medium	low	slight-moderate
The Site	ordinary	low/ moderate	low	low/ negligible	slight/ negligible

Table 1

10.9 Following the implementation of the proposed landscape strategy as illustrated on the proposed drawings 4588.01 - Landscape Masterplan and 4588.02 - Planting Plan the landscape effects would look to be further reduced as the landscape matures around the development site helping to integrate the site into the surrounding landscape.

#### **Landscape Mitigation Measures**

10.10 Native trees would look to be established to the south of the site to help integrate the site into the existing wooded landscape of Woodfold Park to the south and break up the proposed extended car parking areas.

10.11 To the north, north east informal native trees and shrubs would be established in keeping with the character of the existing vegetation that has established on this rough grassland embankment which leads down to Preston New Road.

10.12 To the west the tree planting would be more formalised comprising a line of large growing trees in keeping with the character of a parkland estate. A native hedge would be established to define the edge of the new western site boundary and road access. This would link into the existing hedgerow boundaries within the neighbouring fields providing wildlife connectivity.

## 11.0 Visual Appraisal

- 11.1 A visual appraisal of the site and the wider study area was undertaken on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2020. Deciduous trees and hedges had dropped their leaves and whilst they still provided an element of screening and helped to filter views it is anticipated that in the summer months when in full leaf these would offer further screening to the site.
- 11.2 The site sits at 146m ASL on the top of a hill within an undulating landscape. The landscape falls away to the south down into Arley Brook and Woodfold Park which is a grade II listed park and garden. Mature trees and vegetation have colonised this embankment and provide screening to the south of the site to views from the wider landscape.
- 11.3 To the north of the site the landscape falls away to the road which leaves the site exposed on the top of a hill. The undulating landscape then rises back up to 180m ASL to Mellor and continues to rise up to Mellor Moor. This south facing elevation provides the opportunity for wide open views back across towards the site and the wider landscape beyond.
- 11.4 To the west and east views of the site are largely restricted by the topography of the landscape and/ or the surrounding trees and vegetation but it is possible to catch a partial view or glimpsed view of the site from the houses and footpaths to the west.
- 11.5 The local footpaths were walked and surrounding roads driven to assess the views around the site. 9 viewpoints have been provided in total to help represent a broad range of views and visual receptors who currently have existing views towards the site. For the locations and photographs of the viewpoints chosen please refer to Figures 14-19 in the appendix.
- 11.6 It is anticipated that it maybe be possible for distant views of the site from viewpoints further than the 1km study area. However it is likely that the hotel would be so far away as to reduce its significance within the landscape and hard to discern when viewed in the context of the undulating landform, neighbouring settlements and other scattered built form within the landscape. The magnitude of change as a result of the development would be negligible to none as the extensions to the existing built form would be virtually indiscernible without aid or reference. Therefore, long distance views have not been considered any further within this assessment.
- 11.7 Below is a table of the potential receptors identified around the site this describes the receptor type, the sensitivity and visual quality of the each of the views. Where the viewpoint looks to represent more than one type of receptor the table has been broken down to provide an individual assessment for each. The anticipated magnitude of change and the visual effects have been assessed and the following conclusions have been drawn following the methodology set out in the appendix;

View	Description	Receptor Type	Receptor Sensitivity	Visual Quality	Magnitude of Change	Visual effect
1	Road junction at Mere Ash Brow and Preston New Road	Road user	low	poor/ moderate	low	slight
		Recreational walker	high	poor/ moderate	low	moderate
2	Preston New Road	Road user	low	poor/ moderate	low	slight
3	Public footpath at the top of Mere Ash Brow	Road user	low	moderate	low	slight
		Recreational walker	high	moderate	low	moderate
4	Public footpath and houses on the edge of Mellor	Recreational walker	high	moderate	negligible	slight
		Residential	high	moderate	negligible	slight
5	Further Lane	Road user	low	poor/ moderate	low/ medium	slight- moderate/ slight
6	Residential properties on Further Lane	Residential	high	poor/ moderate	low	moderate
7	Public footpath off Further Lane	Recreational walker	high	moderate	low	moderate
8	Public footpath south of the site	Recreational walker	high	poor	low	moderate
9	Public footpath adjacent to the site	Recreational walker	high	poor	medium	moderate

Table 2

11.8 **Viewpoint 1** looks to represent road uses at the junction of Mere Ash Brow and Preston New Road and people walking the public footpath route along the old access into the Stanley House Estate. The site is partially screened by the topography of the landscape and the trees and vegetation which has established on the embankment. In the summer months when the trees are in full leaf views of built form would be screened further. The existing bedroom/ spa block implemented as part of the approved 2009 scheme is the most visible part of the existing development in this view. The proposals look to implement new built form to the west of Stanley House (behind the existing trees) in keeping with the 2009 approved application, and a new block to the far south east set back into the site. It is likely that only a small element of the proposed new development would be visible from this view. The development would present a slight visual effect for the road user and due to the sensitivity of the receptor a moderate visual effect for the walker.

11.9 **Viewpoint 2** looks to represent road users as they are leaving Mellor Brook along the A677 Preston New Road. There would only be glimpsed views up towards the site from this road as this is a busy road with fast moving traffic. The existing bedroom/ spa block implemented as part of the approved 2009 scheme is the most visible part of the existing development in this view and you can see Stanley House as a shadow behind the trees. In the summer months views of the site would be further screened by these trees. The proposals look to implement new built form to the west of Stanley House (behind the existing trees) in keeping with the 2009 approved application, it is unlikely that any further views of the proposed built form would be visible from this viewpoint. The development would present a slight visual effect for the road user.

11.10 **Viewpoint 3** looks to represent road users at the top of Mere Ash Brow and the public footpaths to the south of Mellor which all have elevated views out across the undulating landscape towards the direction of the site. The bedroom/ spa block implemented as part of the approved 2009 scheme and Stanley House are both visible from this elevated position. Although the wider setting of this view is quite rural there are number of detracting features which include the streetlights and the busy A677 at the bottom of the hill. The proposals look to implement new built form to the west of Stanley House in keeping with the 2009 approved application, but this is likely to be partially screened by the existing trees. A new bedroom block is proposed to the far south eastern corner of the site which would be visible from this view but it would not be out of character with the existing hotel complex which already sits in a prominent position. The development would present a slight visual effect for road users and due to the sensitivity of the receptor a moderate visual effect for the walker.

11.11 **Viewpoint 4** looks to represent people walking on the public footpath off Church Close and also represents all of the houses which sit on the far southern and western edge of Mellor which have open views from the rear of their properties over the wider landscape. This view is extensive due to the elevation of the view. You can see across the landscape towards the coastline in the distance. The site is less prominent in this view as it sits in front of a backdrop of trees and vegetation along the northern boundary of Woodfold Park and the wooded hills in the far distance. Although the wider setting of this view is quite rural there are number of detracting features which include the edge of Mellor Brook and Salmesbury Aerodrome. It would be possible to see part of the extended built form to the east and west of the site but only a small part would be discernible and maybe hard to identify without aid or reference. The character and quality of this view would remain the same. The development would present a slight visual effect for both the walker and people within residential properties.

11.12 **Viewpoint 5** looks to represent people driving along Further Lane and past the entrance to the site. The gates, signage and access road leading up to the site are a prominent feature in this view and you can see a glimpse of the existing hotel set back behind the trees. The topography of the landscape conceals views into the main body of the site and for the most part along Further Lane (apart from a glimpsed view as illustrated in View 6) you cannot see the site at all. The proposed development looks to extend the site and access road to the west which is likely to be partially visible from this view where the tree cover stops. The buildings within the main body of the site would be concealed by the existing built form and the topography of the landscape. There would be a noticeable change to the view, but this would be fleeting when driving along this road and would not be out of context. The extended built form of the proposed spa building which is likely be the main areas of new built form visible from this view is similar to the approved 2009 scheme. The development would present a slight-moderate/ slight visual effect.

11.13 **Viewpoint 6** looks to represent a collection of residential properties along Further Lane which have views across the neighbouring field looking south east towards the site. The topography of the landscape helps to conceal much of the site with only the top half of Stanley House (western elevation) and the roof of the main hotel (barn conversion) visible from this view. As well as a glimpsed view of the site you can also see the large residential development associated with Woodfold Hall being renovated and further down the lane there is another large and imposing residential building which appear to be a characteristic feature in this landscape. The proposed development looks to pull the built form, access road, garden and parking to the west of the existing hotel and also extend further out to the north. A number of these buildings would be single storey which would reduce their dominance in the landscape and for the most part would be concealed by the rising landform with just some of the taller elements being partially visible in this view. It would not affect the character or quality of this view and it is not the main focus of this view. Due to the sensitivity of the receptor the development however it would still present a moderate visual effect.

11.14 **Viewpoint 7** looks to represent people walking along the public footpath off Further Lane which connects down into Woodfold Park to the south and connects back into the site to the north. This footpath follows a stone boundary wall to Woodfold Park and the trees and vegetation in the park screens any views to the south of the path. The main focus of view from this path are the open views to the north which look out in the direction of Mellor and more long-distance views back towards the Forest of Bowland. The site is partially concealed by the contours of the landscape. Other built form which can be seen in this view which includes the houses on the edge of Mellor and those along Further Lane. As discussed in viewpoint 6 the proposed development looks to pull the built form, access road, garden and parking to the west of the existing hotel and also extend further out to the north. A large portion of the development would be concealed by the rising landform with just some of the taller elements being partially visible in this view. It would not affect the character or quality of this view and it is not the main focus. Due to the sensitivity of the receptor whose enjoyment would be focused on the landscape and given the direction of travel towards the site the development would still present a potentially moderate visual effect.

11.15 **Viewpoint 8** looks to represent this same footpath as is passes directly south of the site before tracking south into the woodland within Woodfold Park. The footpath follows the woodland/ field boundary line and sits at a lower elevation to the site. You can see the trees

and vegetation which have been planted at the back of the existing car park. Views from this footpath are limited due to the adjacent woodland and the topography of the landscape. The car park is proposed to be extended to the south closer to this footpath. None of the extended built form would be visible from this view. Woodland and trees are proposed to be planted around these extended parking areas and sections would be surfaced in reinforced grass. The development would result in a perceptible change to the existing view, but this would not impact on its quality as views north towards the site are already restricted. Due to the sensitivity of the receptor whose focused would be on the landscape the development would still present a moderate visual effect.

11.16 **Viewpoint 9** looks to represent people walking into the site from the public footpath off Further Lane. This section of footpath follows the private access road around the far western boundary of the site and then continues down the old access which leads onto Preston New Road. The walker has entered an existing hotel complex and left the adjacent countryside behind so the sensitivity/ expectations of the receptor has reduced. Views are dominated by the hotel and the access road is lit by streetlamps. The footpath is proposed to be diverted to the new access road alignment which is being pulled to the west. It would continue to follow the edge of the new extended hotel complex at a similar distance to the hotel buildings. The development would present a noticeable change in the existing view as the buildings and layout would be altered but this would not change the existing experience or character of this view. The development would present a moderate visual effect.

11.17 Following the implementation of the landscape strategy as illustrated on the proposed drawings 4588.01 - Landscape Masterplan and 4588.02 - Planting Plan the visual effects can be reduced as the landscape matures around the development site. Tree and shrubs would not only help to integrate the development into the existing landscape character they would also provide screening around the development to help improve the visual amenity. Once the planting has established it has been assessed that of the 12 receptors identified within the assessment 5 of the visual effect identified would be reduced to negligible, 6 to slight and only one would remain as slight-moderate which is the footpath immediately inside the site.

#### **Visual Mitigation Measures**

11.18 To the north, north east informal native trees and shrubs would be established in keeping with the character of the existing vegetation to provide screening to the existing and proposed built form which would be visible from viewpoints identified to the north of the site.

11.19 To the west of the site formal tree planting in keeping with the character of a parkland estate would be established to help to screen/ filter views of the built from viewpoints to the west of the site. A native hedge would be used to help create a physical and visual buffer between the new site boundary and the adjacent field.

11.20 Native trees would look to be established to the south of the site to help screen views of the extended car parking areas and integrate the site into the existing wooded landscape of Woodfold Park to protect views from the public footpath to the south.

## 12.0 Summary and Conclusion

12.1 The landscape and visual assessment looks to provide a baseline assessment of the character and appearance of the site and wider landscape to assess the potential landscape and visual effects that the development may present. We have reviewed planning policy in relation to landscape and looked at published landscape character assessments alongside further desktop research and site visit to make an informed assessment using the methodology set out in the appendix.

### **Planning Policy and Previous Approved Application**

12.2 An application for the expansion of the hotel was approved back in 2009, this was part Implemented in 2010 with the construction of the bedroom/spa block to the east of Stanley House and various extensions to the barn and entrance buildings. The remainder of the approved application has not been implemented.

12.3 Ribble Valley Borough Council and English Heritage were consulted during the original 2009 approved application and throughout the pre-application of these new development proposals. For the 2009 application the case officer concluded that "*The proposal has no significant detrimental impact on the nearby residential amenity nor would it have an adverse visual impact*". The proposed development looks to retain the key elements of the original proposals that were never implemented, albeit the positioning and scale of the buildings has slightly changed.

12.4 The pre-application Heritage Statement produced by Hinchcliffe Heritage states that the new development "*would reduce its intensity (to the 2008 approved application for works to a listed building) and would allow the principal elevation of the listed building to be viewed without any physical accretions to either side*".

12.5 Ribble Valley District Wide Local Plan which provides the most current planning policy guidelines for this area was adopted in June 1998. It shows that the site lies within Open Countryside and Green Belt. The site sits within an isolated and elevated position within Green Belt and is surrounded by farmland and woodland away from the main settlement boundaries of Blackburn, Mellor and Mellor Brook.

12.6 Development would comprise the expansion of an existing established hotel which would not be out of character with the existing site and would be limited in terms of its visual and landscape impacts. This would help to reduce impact on the Green Belt and maintain the purpose for including land (and this site) within it. The approved 2009 application for the expansion of the hotel approved the development on the fact that the officer "*accepts that the scheme would impinge on the openness of Green Belt but a balance needs to be made against other material considerations which in this instance I consider make the scheme acceptable*".

### **Landscape Impact**

12.7 Whilst the published National and Local Landscape character descriptions helped to provide an accurate description of the baseline local landscape character and highlight the key important characteristics a more local landscape character assessment was carried out to help assess the potential impact of the development on the local landscape character.

- 12.8 The study area was divided up into two distinct character types which includes the surrounding areas of settlement and the open countryside. The landscape effects of the proposed development on settlement has been assessed as negligible and for the site itself as slight/ negligible.
- 12.9 For the surrounding countryside the landscape effects of the proposed development has been assessed as slight-moderate. The proposed hotel and associated works would present a slight encroachment into the countryside, but this would not be out of character with what already exists. The new development provides an opportunity to improve upon the setting of Stanley House and the site arrangements than those previously approved for the 2009 application.
- 12.10 Following the implementation and establishment of the proposed landscape strategy as highlighted on the mitigation plan on Figure 20 in the appendix the landscape effects would be reduced to negligible and none, helping to integrate the new development into the surrounding landscape without any adverse landscape impacts.

### **Visual Impact**

- 12.11 A visual appraisal of the site and the wider study area was undertaken, local footpaths were walked and surrounding roads driven to assess the views around the site. 9 viewpoints (which includes a total of 12 separate receptors) were identified and assessed to help represent a broad range of views and visual receptors who could potentially experience visual effects as a result of the development.
- 12.12 Following the implementation and establishment of the proposed landscape strategy as highlighted on the mitigation plan the potential visual effects could be reduced. It was concluded that of the 12 individual receptors identified, 5 of the visual effects could be reduced to negligible, 6 to slight and only one would continue to have a slight-moderate visual effect as a result of the development. This was the view from the public footpath within the site which although would be subject to the most direct change it would not be out of character with that already experienced when walking through an existing hotel site.
- 12.13 The tree and shrubs proposed as part of the landscape and visual mitigation would not only provide screening around the development to reduce these visual impacts they would also help to integrate the development into the existing surrounding landscape and improve the visual amenity overall. In total there would be approximately 1.4 hectares of native woodland planted within and around the site, 550 lin.m of native hedgerows, and numerous individual native trees which include species such as Lime, Oak, Alder and Birch.
- 12.14 When compared against the approved 2009 proposed development there would be no greater visual effects arising from the proposed development.

### **Conclusion**

- 12.15 The proposed development would not present any significant adverse impacts to the landscape or the local visual amenity. Once the landscape proposals have been put into place as part of the proposed new development, the much improved Stanley House Hotel and Spa will become an integral part of the existing landscape.

## APPENDIX 1.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

The methodology adopted is based upon the current Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) 3rd Edition 2013.

### **Landscape Effects**

A desktop study of landscape policies, designations, and published character appraisals has been undertaken and an independent appraisal made of the character and value of the proposed development site and surrounding landscape.

In order to reach an understanding of the effects of development on a landscape the GLVIA considers three different key aspects or receptors of the landscape:

**Elements:** Individual elements within the landscape, which are quantifiable and include features such as hills, valleys, woods, trees, hedges and ponds;

**Characteristics:** Elements or combinations of elements that make a particular contribution to the character of the area i.e. Scenic quality, Tranquillity or Wildness;

**Character:** A combination of geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use and human settlement.

These elements combine to give an indication of the sensitivity of the landscape and its ability to accept change. In addition, the guidelines require that the landscape condition, value and quality are considered and weighed as part of this judgement. This is distinguished from visual receptors which, while sharing some of the same characteristics, have different contributing factors when considering sensitivity to change.

The following tables identify the key factors taken into consideration when assessing landscape value and quality. Landscape condition and historic development are more factual descriptions with less reliance on a subjective professional judgement. They are completed through a straightforward comparative description and reference to the site and its surrounds.

**TABLE 1 CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING LANDSCAPE QUALITY**

Landscape Quality	Definition
<b>Exceptional</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Strong landscape structure, characteristics, patterns, and/or clear urban grain identifiable with a historic period or event;</li> <li>-Appropriate management for land use and land cover and/or a well maintained urban environment of distinction;</li> <li>-Distinct features worthy of conservation, historic architectural grain;</li> <li>-Sense of place exceptional local distinctiveness;</li> <li>-No detracting features.</li> </ul>
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Strong landscape structure, characteristic patterns and/or clear urban grain;</li> <li>-Appropriate management for land use and landcover, but potentially scope to improve;</li> <li>-Distinct features worthy of conservation;</li> <li>-Sense of place;</li> <li>-Occasional detracting features.</li> </ul>
<b>Good</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Recognisable landscape structure and/or urban grain</li> <li>-Scope to improve management for land use and land cover;</li> <li>-Some features worthy of conservation;</li> <li>-Sense of place;</li> <li>-Some detracting features.</li> </ul>
<b>Ordinary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Distinguishable landscape structure, characteristics, patterns of landform and landcover often masked by land use;</li> <li>-Fractured urban grain with patterns of use difficult to distinguish;</li> <li>-Scope to improve management of vegetation;</li> <li>-Some features worthy of conservation</li> <li>-Some detracting features;</li> </ul>
<b>Poor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Weak landscape structure, characteristic patterns of landform and landcover are missing, little or no recognisable urban grain;</li> <li>-Mixed land use evident;</li> <li>-Lack of management and intervention has resulted in degradation;</li> <li>-Frequent detracting features.</li> </ul>
<b>Very Poor</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Degraded landscape structure, characteristic patterns and/or urban grain missing;</li> <li>-Mixed land use or dereliction dominates;</li> <li>-Lack of management/ intervention has resulted in degradation;</li> <li>-Extensive detracting features.</li> </ul>

**TABLE 2 CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING LANDSCAPE VALUE**

Landscape Value	Definition	Typical Example of Importance
<b>High</b>	-An iconic landscape or element(s) held in high regard both nationally, regionally and by the local community; -A landscape or element(s) widely used by both the local community and a broader visiting community; -Features of particular historical protected significance; - Landscape or space which defines or is closely associated with a community and its life and livelihood.	Nationally, regionally recognised eg parts of National Park, AONB, all or great majority of AGLV; Conservation or Listed status.
<b>Good</b>	-A landscape or element(s) recognised regionally and locally as important; -A landscape widely used by the local community; -Features or elements widely used or visited and held in association with the area or community.	Part of an AGLV
<b>Moderate</b>	- A landscape of local importance; -A landscape widely used by the local community; -A sense of place recognisable and associated with the local area.	Area of local landscape importance
<b>Low</b>	A landscape without particular noted significance; A landscape or elements infrequently used by the local community; A landscape which is not distinct and does not add to the overall context of the area.	

For the purposes of developing a baseline description, information previously published or otherwise in the public realm is studied and its relevance to the site in question considered. From this combination of desktop, document and field study an overall view of the character of the landscape is made with which to then assess the landscape sensitivity.

Landscape sensitivity is an assessment of the degree to which a particular landscape type or area can accommodate change arising from a particular development, without detrimental effects on its character. It will vary with;

- Existing land use.
- The pattern and scale of the landscape.
- Visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors.
- The scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape.
- The value placed on the landscape

Sensitivity to change is the analysis of the capacity of the landscape to accept change through the introduction or loss of new or existing features, based on the professional judgement of the quality and value or importance of the landscape. The sensitivity of landscape resource is defined by its existing land use, pattern and scale of the landscape, visual enclosure/openness of views, and distribution of visual receptors, the scope for mitigation, which would be in character with the existing landscape, and the value placed on the landscape.

A professional judgement is reached taking into account the factors and criteria outlined previously above and a level of sensitivity is assigned to a landscape or sub area as appropriate.

The sensitivity to change has been categorised as follows:

**TABLE 3 CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING LANDSCAPE SENSITIVITY**

Landscape	High	Medium	Low
<b>Landscape designation</b>	A landscape of distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes. Includes national or regionally designated landscapes e.g. Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), National Scenic Area. Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes on the National Register	A landscape of moderately valued characteristics. Including local landscape designations.	A landscape of relative unimportance, the nature of which is tolerant to substantial change. No landscape designation.
<b>Landscape resource</b>	Important landscape resources or landscapes of particularly distinctive character and therefore likely to be subject to national designation or otherwise with high values to the public. Is vulnerable to minor changes.	Moderately valued characteristics reasonably tolerant of change.	Relatively unimportant/immature or damaged landscapes tolerant of substantial change.
<b>Scale and enclosure</b>	Small intimate landscape.	Medium scale landscape.	Large scale open landscape.
<b>Landform and topography</b>	Mountainous or large dominating hills and valleys. Intimate small-scale landscapes defined through easily identifiable elements in the immediate landscape.	Rolling landform with small hills and valleys. Some intimacy and human scale through landscape elements such as hedgerows and woodland copses.	Large scale open landscape. Little intimacy or human scale, few character elements or features.
<b>Settlement</b>	Organic land cover pattern	A gradation between High and Low	Grid like linear land cover pattern
<b>Landmarks and visible built structures</b>	Landscape with symbolic or important features	A gradation between High and Low	Landscape with no recognised individual features or elements
<b>Remoteness and tranquility</b>	Remote location, little evidence of human activity	A gradation between High and Low	Highly developed countryside areas with continuous evidence of human activity
<b>Landscape Quality and Value</b>	A landscape of exceptional or high quality and/or high value.	A landscape of good or ordinary quality and /or good or moderate value	A landscape of low or poor quality and value

On considering the magnitude of landscape change, in the evaluation of the effects it is helpful to rank or quantify individual effects within a series of levels or categories, indicating a gradation from high to low. On this basis, Table 4 provides the criteria used to assess the magnitude of change:

**TABLE 4 CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE (LANDSCAPE)**

Magnitude of change	Beneficial	Adverse
<b>High</b>	Major positive alteration to significant elements or features or the removal of substantial elements or features perceived as a negative or detracting influence. The alteration of a landscape to substantially increase both the landscape value and quality and complement acknowledged aspirations and objectives. A change which is not balanced against other negative introductions or other adverse alterations to the landscape.	Total loss of or major alteration to key valued elements, features and characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements considered to be prominent and totally uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Would cause a high quality landscape to be permanently changed and its quality diminished.
<b>Medium</b>	A positive alteration to landscape elements or features which increases both landscape value and quality. The removal of elements or features which are perceived as negative or detracting features. A change which is not balanced against other adverse alterations to the landscape.	Partial loss of or alteration to one or more key elements, features or characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements that may be prominent but not substantially uncharacteristic when set within the attributes of the receiving landscape. Would be out of scale with the landscape and leave an adverse impact over a landscape of quality.
<b>Low</b>	A change which introduces elements, features or characteristics which are of positive benefit to the landscape character and improve value and quality. The removal of negative elements or detracting features. A change which may result from a combination of both beneficial and adverse changes to the landscape.	Minor loss or alteration to one or more key elements, features, characteristics of the baseline or introduction of elements that may be prominent but may not be uncharacteristic when set within the receiving landscape. May not fit into the scale and landform.
<b>Negligible</b>	A minor change which is not uncharacteristic and maintains the quality and value of the landscape.	A minor change which is not uncharacteristic and maintains the quality and value of the landscape.

**SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS**

The significance of visual effects is assessed by taking into consideration the sensitivity and importance of the receptor and the nature, scale or magnitude, visual susceptibility and duration or reversibility of the change or effect.

Landscape impacts can be described as being adverse or beneficial depending on whether the changes described add or remove a value or elements/features recognised as of particular value to the receiving landscape. In certain circumstances the change to the landscape may be substantial but the character and quality of the landscape remains unaffected. Such a situation may arise within an urban environment where the nature of the environment leads to an expectation for the land which includes change and development. It may be appropriate in such a situation to attribute a neutral effect where it can be demonstrated that the changes will have little consequence over the character of the landscape.

The assessment of impact for landscape effects is the result of the sensitivity of a receptor being considered alongside the magnitude of change anticipated for each receptor, this is summarised through the table below:

**TABLE 5 SUMMARY TABLE TO DETERMINE LANDSCAPE EFFECTS**

Sensitivity		Magnitude of Change			
		High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	substantial	moderate-substantial	moderate	slight	
Medium	moderate-substantial	moderate	slight-moderate	negligible	

	Low	moderate	slight-moderate	slight	negligible
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## VISUAL EFFECTS

The assessment of visual effects describes the changes in the character of the available views resulting from the development and the changes in the visual amenity of the visual receptor.

The assessment process mirrors that of landscape effects in that it requires the collation of baseline information relating to the nature and type of views and the receptors which will receive them. This information is collected through a combination of measures including site work, photographic recording (refer to the methodology for photographic images for viewpoints below) and computer modeling technologies. The resulting picture of visual influence can be described as the Zone of Theoretical Visibility, describing all the points from which the development may be visible. As with landscape effects, visual impacts are determined by considering the magnitude and nature of change as set against the sensitivity of the receptor.

Judgement about the value of the view take in to account recognition of heritage and planning designations, and any value attached through appearance in tourist information, literature and art.

**TABLE 6 CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING VISUAL QUALITY**

View Quality	Description
<b>High</b>	Iconic views or skylines which are individual character elements in their own right. Protected views through Supplementary Planning Guidance or development framework. View mentioned in the listing for a conservation area, listed building or scheduled monument as being important with regard to its setting. Wide panoramic distant views of a valued landscape(s).
<b>Moderate</b>	Views with strong and distinctive features. Uninterrupted views. Views over a landscape of recognised character and quality
<b>Poor</b>	Restricted views or views over a landscape of low value and quality.

The assessment of sensitivity of each visual receptor combines judgements on the susceptibility of the receptor to the Proposed Development and the value attributed to the receptor. The susceptibility of people to changes in views is related to their activity when experiencing the view and the extent to which their interest is focussed on the views and the visual amenity. Judgement on both the value of the views and the viewers susceptibility to change in the view are used to judge sensitivity of the receptor, which has been determined as high, medium or low.

**TABLE 7 CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING VISUAL SENSITIVITY**

Receptor Sensitivity	Description
<b>High</b>	Occupiers of residential properties within 1km of the proposed development where the view is the main focus/ contributes to the setting of the property. Users of outdoor recreational facilities, including public rights of way, whose attention may be focused on the landscape Elevated panoramic viewpoints

Receptor Sensitivity	Description
	Communities where the development results in changes in the landscape setting or valued views enjoyed by the community
<b>Medium</b>	Occupiers of residential properties over 1km from the development or where properties are enclosed, and the view/ wider landscape is not the main focus. People engaged in outdoor recreation where enjoyment of the landscape is incidental rather than the main interest People travelling through the landscape where the views involved are transient and sporadic but have a special significance in either the journey or the expression of the landscape or community being visited.
<b>Low</b>	People at their place of work, Industrial facilities. People travelling through the landscape in cars, trains or other transport such that the speed and nature of the views involved are short lived and have no special significance

The magnitude of change to the view will depend on numerous factors including the extent and nature of the current view, the distance to the proposed development, the time of year and whether other elements intervene in the view such as vegetation or moving traffic. To assist this process the level of change is graded between Large and Negligible and is described below:

**TABLE 8 CRITERIA FOR DESCRIBING MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE (VISUAL)**

Magnitude	Examples
<b>High</b>	The development would result in a prominent change to the existing view and would change the quality of the view. The development would be easily noticed by the observer. The development may break the skyline or form some other substantial change to the view.
<b>Medium</b>	The development would result in a noticeable change in the existing view that may change the character and quality of the view. The change would be readily noticed by the observer but would not dominate the view.
<b>Low</b>	The development would result in a perceptible change in the existing view but this would not affect its character or quality. The development will appear as a small element in the wider landscape which may be missed by the casual observer. The view may be at such a distance as to reduce the appearance of the development.
<b>Negligible</b>	Only a small part of the development will be discernible and this may be for only part of the year or be a filtered view. The view may be at such a distance as to render the change virtually indiscernible without aid or reference. The quality and character of the view will remain unchanged.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF EFFECTS

The significance of visual effects is assessed by taking into consideration the sensitivity and importance of the receptor and the nature, scale or magnitude, visual susceptibility and duration or reversibility of the change or effect.

The summary of effects can be expressed as an adverse or beneficial effect depending on the assessor's view regarding the nature and quality of the existing view and how this will be changed. In some circumstances the change may be described as a neutral change if the expectation of the viewer or the fundamental nature and characteristics of a view appear unaffected.

On assessing the magnitude of impact, more weight is usually given to changes in the view or visual amenity which are greater in scale and visible over a wide area. Distance from the viewer to the impact change is also factored in to give an overall score for magnitude or impact.

The significance of visual effects is expressed through the table below:

**TABLE 9 SUMMARY TABLE TO DETERMINE VISUAL EFFECTS**

	Magnitude of Change
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	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	substantial	moderate-substantial	moderate	slight
Medium	moderate-substantial	moderate	slight-moderate	negligible
Low	moderate	slight-moderate	slight	negligible

It is considered that a score of moderate-substantial adverse or above represents a significant impact for visual assessment.

## METHODOLOGY FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES FOR VIEWPOINTS

Photographs taken to represent views within the visual appraisal are taken using the following formats and standards:

Panoramic images need to represent the eye's view and are used for views wider than approx. 40 degrees.

These are taken using:

- APS-C mirrorless camera with a short zoom lens
  - Aperture => F8
  - ISO 200-400
  - Focal length 31 degrees approx.
  - Manual exposure
  - Manual focus

This provides a consistent group of images that are then manually 'stitched' together using Photoshop to give a view representative of the human eye. All shots are taken in portrait format at eye level and the camera is panned horizontally to ensure minimum distortion and cropping in the final image.

If images are printed they should be printed at a high enough resolution to allow detail to be visible at normal viewing distance; 300-500mm for A4/A3 and on a quality of paper that will cause any bleeding of the fine detail.

**APPENDIX 2.0**

Please refer to separate document.

**FIGURES**