



Figure 4: Landscape Masterplan

06 DESIGNATIONS AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 This section provides an overview of the designations and policy framework of particular relevance to the landscape and visual issues considered in this LVIA. Policies with specific geographical limits and which are relevant to a consideration of landscape and visual matters are illustrated on Figure 5.

European Landscape Convention

- 5.2 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. The convention promotes landscape protection, management and planning, as well as European co-operation on landscape issues. Signed by the UK Government in February 2006, the ELC became binding from March 2007. It applies to all landscapes, towns and villages, as well as open countryside; the coast and inland areas; and ordinary or even degraded landscapes, as well as those that are afforded protection.
- 5.3 The Government has stated that it considers the UK to be compliant with the ELC's requirements and in effect the principle requirements of the ELC are already enshrined in the existing suite of national policies and guidance on the assessment of landscape and visual effects.
- 5.4 The ELC defines landscape as:
- 'An area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors.'* (Council of Europe 2000)
- 5.5 It is important to recognise that the ELC does not require the preservation of all landscapes although landscape protection is one of the core themes of the convention. Equally important though is the requirement to manage and plan future landscape change.
- 5.6 The ELC highlights the importance of developing landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes. The analysis of landscape and visual matters in this LVIA read in context with appropriate national and local policy will enable decisions to be made with due regard to landscape character as promoted by the ELC.

National Planning Policy

- 5.7 A revision to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in December 2023. A summary of the key relevant text is outlined below:
- 5.8 The NPPF sets out the Government's national policy on land use planning in England. The primary principle of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in section 2, paragraph 11.

NPPF SECTION 12: ACHIEVING WELL DESIGNED PLACES

- 5.9 Paragraph 135 outlines some key points in respect to the design of new developments and states:
- 5.10 "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:
- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
 - b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
 - c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities)..."

NPPF SECTION 15: CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 6.12 Paragraph 180 of the NPPF in relation to valued landscapes, states:
- "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland..."

Local Planning Policy

- 5.11 The site falls within the administrative boundary of Ribble Borough Council. The Local Plan comprises the Core Strategy 2008–2028 A Local Plan for Ribble Valley, Ribble Valley Proposal's Map and the Housing and Economic Development – Development Plan Document. The latter includes the site as the proposed housing allocation for Wilpshire (HAL2 in Regulation 19 document).
- 5.12 The site is almost adjacent to the 'Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council' (Blackburn East) boundary to the south (see Figure 5). This Borough has prepared a local development plan called Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan 2021 to 2037 (Adopted January 2024). The document introduced a new site allocation for residential development and regulated it by policy H195.
- 5.13 The associated policies of relevance to the site are set out as follows.

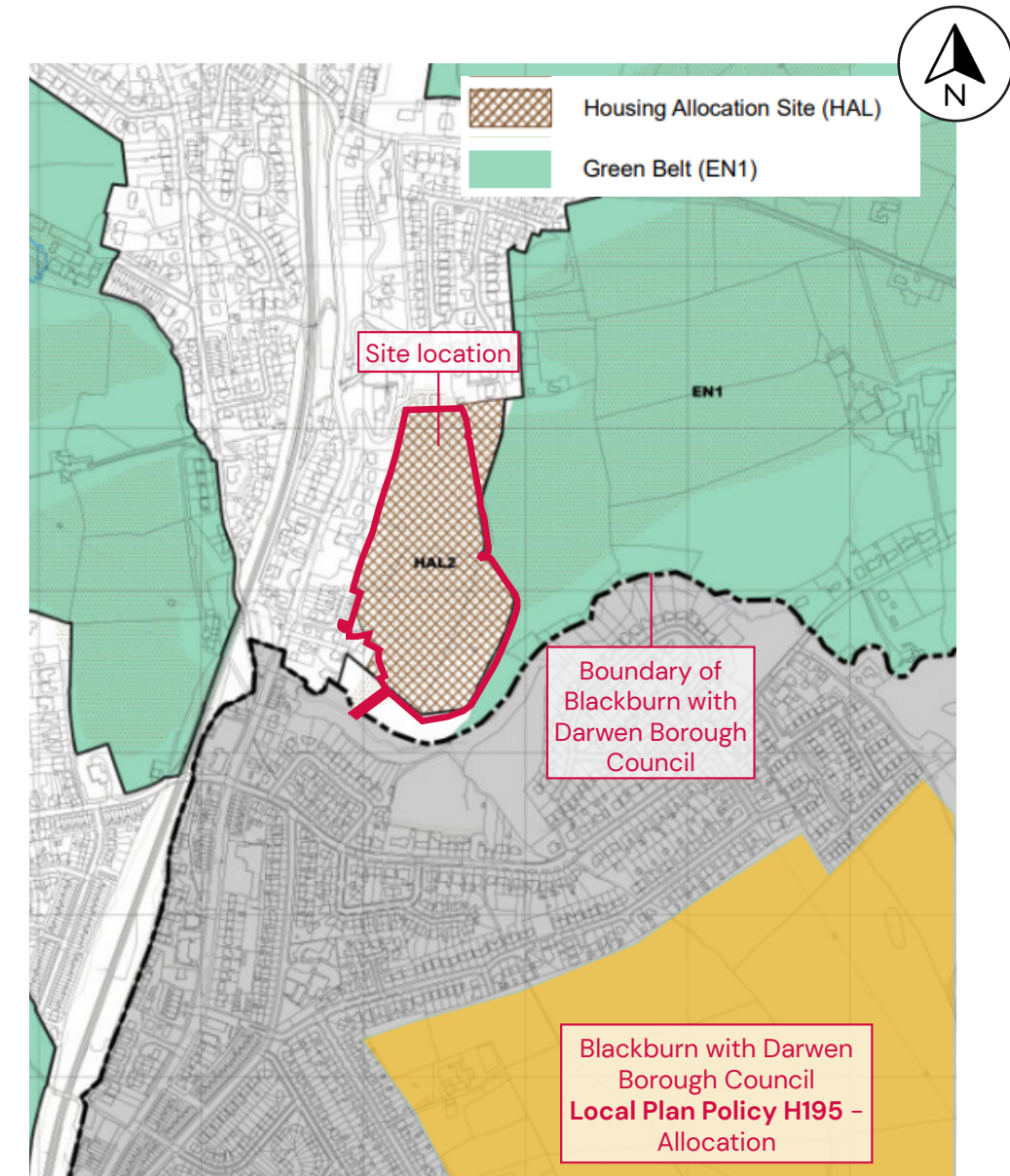


Figure 5: Housing and Economic Development DPD Proposals Map – Sheet 6 – Wilpshire (14) Whalley and Surrounding Area (18).

Ribble Valley Borough Council Core Strategy 2008–2028

- 5.14 The policies within the Plan, that are of relevance to this report are outlined below:

KEY STATEMENT EN1: GREEN BELT

- 5.15 "The overall extent of the green belt will be maintained to safeguard the surrounding countryside from inappropriate encroachment. The development of new buildings will be limited to the purposes of agriculture, forestry, essential 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".

KEY STATEMENT EN2: OPEN COUNTRYSIDE

- 5.16 "... As a principle the Council will expect development to be in keeping with the character of the landscape, reflecting local distinctiveness, vernacular style, scale, style, features and building materials".
- 5.17 The policy goes on to discuss open countryside *"the Council will also seek to ensure that the open countryside is protected from inappropriate development. Developers should adopt a nonstandardised approach to design which recognises and enhances local distinctiveness, landscape character, the quality of the built fabric, historic patterns and landscape tranquillity"*.

KEY STATEMENT EN3: SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- 5.18 *"Ribble Valley Borough Council will liaise with the County Council over development within Mineral Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) in both proposing future site allocations and in determining planning applications. This liaison will include consideration of the issue of preventing the unnecessary sterilisation of mineral resources within MSAs"*.

POLICY DMG1: GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Design

- 5.19 Point 2 of the policy states all development must "be sympathetic to existing and proposed land uses in terms of its size, intensity and nature as well as scale, massing, style, features and building materials".
- 5.20 Point 3 of the policy states all development must "consider the density, layout and relationship between buildings, which is of major importance. Particular emphasis will be placed on visual appearance and the relationship to surroundings, including impact on landscape character, as well as the effects of development on existing amenities".

Environment

- 5.21 Point 2 states "with regards to possible effects upon the natural environment, the council propose that the principles of the mitigation hierarchy be followed. This gives sequential preference to the following: 1) enhance the environment 2) avoid the impact 3) minimise the impact 4) restore the damage 5) compensate for the damage 6) offset the damage".

POLICY DMG2: STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.22 Point 1 states *"development proposals in the principal settlements of clitheroe, longridge and whalley and the tier 1 villages [which includes Wilpshire] should consolidate, expand or round-off development so that it is closely related to the main built up areas, ensuring this is appropriate to the scale of, and in keeping with, the existing settlement"*.

- 5.23 The policy goes on to state that *"within the open countryside development will be required to be in keeping with the character of the landscape and acknowledge the special qualities of the area by virtue of its size, design, use of materials, landscaping and siting. Where possible new development should be accommodated through the re-use of existing buildings, which in most cases is more appropriate than new build"*.

POLICY DME1: PROTECTING TREES AND WOODLAND

- 5.24 This policy seeks to protect trees; it states that the borough council will ensure that: *"the visual, botanical and historical value, together with the useful and safe life expectancy of tree cover, are important factors in determining planning applications, this will include an assessment of the impact of the density of development, lay out of roads, access points and services on any affected trees"*.

POLICY DME2: LANDSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE PROTECTION

- 5.25 This policy states that *"development proposals will be refused which significantly harm important landscape or landscape features including:*

1. *traditional stone walls*
2. *ponds*
3. *characteristic herb rich meadows and pastures*
4. *woodlands*
5. *copses*
6. *hedgerows and individual trees"*.

POLICY DMB5: FOOTPATHS AND BRIDLEWAYS

- 5.26 This policy states that *"in situations where a public right of way will inevitably become less attractive (due to adjacent/ surrounding development), the policy should require compensatory enhancements such that there is a net improvement to the public right of way network. The borough council will, unless suitable mitigation measures are made, protect from the development footpaths which:*

1. *provide a link between towns/villages and attractive open land;*
2. *link with the ribble way footpath;*
3. *are associated to the local nature reserves;*
4. *and are heavily used.*

- 5.27 *The Council considers the protection and enhancement of the footpath and bridleways network to be important given the character of the area and the contribution such networks can be made to leisure, health and tourism"*.

Blackburn with Darwen Local Plan 2021 to 2037 (Adopted January 2024)

POLICY H195 NORTH EAST BLACKBURN STRATEGIC HOUSING SITE

- 5.28 This new allocation brought forward by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council is a large scale Green Belt release site located approx. 400m to the south of the Salesbury View site (shown at Figure 5 and on the viewpoint plan at Figure 8). The extent of this allocation is also illustrated on the photomontage viewpoints at Appendix D. The allocation site can be clearly seen from Viewpoint 2 – view from footpath 3-46-FP 23 looking south and is partially visible from Viewpoint 4 – view from 3-33-FP 12 looking south east. Viewpoint 7 – view from public right of way north west of Upper Mickle Hey looking north west is located within Allocation H195 and would be subject to a significantly altered future baseline.

The Policy H195 states that:

"Amount/type of development: 750 residential units delivered within plan period with development continuing beyond 2037 (total of 1500 units to be delivered across the site)".

Landscape Designations

- 5.29 There are no local, national or international designations of landscape importance across the site.
- 5.30 Green Belt abuts the site along the eastern boundary. The Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty lies approximately 5.8km to the north at its closest point. Ramsgreave Wood Ancient and Semi-natural woodland is located approximately 874m east of the site.

Heritage and Ecological Designations

- 5.31 The assessment of potential effects on ecological sites such as SSSI or Ramsar; or on the setting of sensitive cultural heritage designations such as Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas does not form part of this assessment. However, the identification of such assets is important as they provide an indication of the value and quality of the wider landscape character as well as an indication of areas from which visual receptors have a heightened visual sensitivity.
- 5.32 In terms of historic designations, there are two listed buildings within 1km of the site; Upper Mickle Hey Farmhouse and attached buildings approximately 845m to the south-east and Eddy Holes Stable and Shippens to Eddy Holes located approximately 965m south-east of the site. There are no Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments or Registered Parks and Gardens within 1km of the site.
- 5.33 There are no ecological designations present on the site or within the surrounding 1km of the site.

07 LANDSCAPE BASELINE / EFFECTS

- 6.1 A baseline study has been undertaken to record the character of the landscape and the elements, features and aesthetic and perceptual factors which contribute to it and to highlight any particular sensitivities that should be addressed in the masterplan.

Landscape Features

Topography

- 6.2 In terms of the wider context, the site lies within an area of landform where there are frequent rounded ridges formed by gritstone outcrops. The nearest of these hilltops is located approximately 350m north-east of the site at +202m AOD, (with the site area forming the lower slopes of this landform down to the existing residential edge between the 150m – 175m contours), another is located south of the site near Brownhill Farm forming part of the Blackburn with Darwen allocation H195 at an elevation of +190m AOD. Height House further to the south east sits on a ridge top at +235m AOD, this ridge extends along part of Blackburn Old Road to the north east before descending in to Great Harwood. A trig point north of York Road sits at +235m AOD with numerous other hill tops along York Road and Moor Lane forming another ridge top.
- 6.3 The site sits on the western side of the ridge, where the landform begins to fall down towards Knotts Brook and Showley Brook. Levels within the site range from approximately +177m AOD at the eastern boundary to +148.5m AOD on the southern boundary. It slopes relatively steeply from the east to the west and south. The wider landform of the rounded ridge continues gaining height to the north east.
- 6.4 The value of the site topography is judged to be low-medium. Whilst the sloping topography forms part of a landscape feature identified as a key characteristic of Landscape Character Area (LCA) 7a, Mellor Ridge, i.e. the rounded ridge profiles of the gritstone outcrops, (see 'A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire' (2000)), the site is located on the lower slopes of the western extent of the landform immediately adjacent to the residential edge and does not contain any individual topographical features of note nor does it form a key component of the ridge, being located in a portion of land of lower elevation than the wider feature. The ridges within LCA 7a are considered to be important buffers between urban development and rural landscapes and this function would be maintained by the development of the site which would be located on the lower slopes with open farmland continuing to rise to the north east.
- 6.5 The susceptibility of the landform to change is considered to be

medium. The landform is susceptible to some change in order to accommodate the development, some cut and fill is expected to enable the construction of development platforms and split level properties. Other works to land form will include topsoil stripping, temporary storage mounds and earthworks to accommodate building foundations and roads and a SUDs pond.

- 6.6 In combining judgements on value and susceptibility the landform is considered to have a **medium** sensitivity to residential development.
- 6.7 The magnitude of change to landform is considered to be **medium.** The proposed properties would be constructed on development plateaus which are expected to vary in relation to the existing ground levels, more so in the steeper sloping areas of the site. Works to create the access roads are expected to be localised and generally follow the existing lie of the land.
- 6.8 The combination of sensitivity and magnitude of change results in a moderate level of effect to the topography of the site during all phases of development. The effects will be adverse, long-term and permanent but the overall ridge profile of the main body of the gritstone outcrop will be maintained beyond the site boundaries to the north east.

Land use, buildings and infrastructure

- 6.9 The site is currently used for pasture and is graded 4, (poor) under the Agricultural Land Classification. There are no buildings or Public Rights of Way present on the site. An overhead power line crosses the site with two pylons situated within the site boundary, in the southern field.
- 6.10 The site is considered to have **medium** value in terms of its use. It is typical of the wider agricultural land to the east, north and west where there is a mix of arable fields and land used for pasture. It is a greenfield site that contributes to the character of the immediate surroundings of the site both adjacent to the site and to an extent in views from across the valley to the west. However, the site is located on the urban fringe with development surrounding it on three sides, not immediately adjacent to it in the south, but visible from the site above Knotts Brook.
- 6.11 Susceptibility of this feature/landscape element at a site level is deemed to be **high.** The development would alter the baseline situation from a greenfield site to a housing development.
- 6.12 In combining judgements on value and susceptibility the overall sensitivity of this feature is judged to be **high.**
- 6.13 The magnitude of change is assessed as high. The proposals would see the introduction of 80 residential units across a total site area of 4.9783 Ha. In terms of scale, properties are expected to be two/two and a half storey, with the development mass

set back from the eastern boundary by a landscape buffer, planted with trees as illustrated in Figure 4 and outlined in the Mitigation chapter. Proposed dwellings are broken up by areas of green space that retain existing hedgerows where possible and include new tree planting, all of which lessens the perceived scale of the development. In terms of geographical extent the proposed development occupies a little over half of the site and a very small area of land when considering the wider landscape character area, with effects concentrated to the site itself and a localised area around it.

- 6.14 The overall effect is considered to be **moderate/major** during all phases of the development. Effects would be adverse, long term and permanent.
- 6.15 Adverse effects are however moderated by the manner in which the proposed development has been designed, the manner in which the existing landscape features have been sought to be retained and managed and the proximity of similar scale buildings to the north, west and south. This includes the retention of existing hedgerows and trees where possible and the incorporation of new tree planting on the eastern boundary, as well as throughout the site. The mitigation to the eastern boundary is key in reducing visual impact and mimicking the character of other built form on surrounding valley sides.

Vegetation

- 6.16 Vegetation on site comprises a linear band of trees that runs east-west through the centre, five of which are Category A trees, 4 are Category B. The remaining four trees and two tree groups are Category C. A mixed species hedgerow runs north-south through the southern field and is also Category C. The ground cover is rough grass, used for grazing.
- 6.17 The northern boundary has limited vegetation, some mature trees are located in a neighbouring garden. The western boundary comprises a mix of scattered hedgerow and trees. The southern boundary abuts the mature trees associated with Knotts Brook.
- 6.18 Within the wider landscape, to the south and south-west, mature trees continue along the route of Knotts Brook wrapping around Warrenside Close. Areas of woodland and tree groups are limited within the landscape immediately east of the site. Vegetation consists of occasional hedgerows and linear belts of trees along some roads. Trees associated with the fairways of Wilpshire Golf Club. West of the site beyond Whalley Road, hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small woodlands are more common, similarly in the north beyond Wilpshire.
- 6.19 In terms of value, trees and hedgerows are common in the landscape to the north and west, to the east they are a little less so. They are notable features when in close proximity to the site,

specifically from the footpath that runs immediately outside of the eastern boundary. Overall, the vegetation on site is judged to be of **medium** value.

- 6.20 The susceptibility to change of the vegetation on site is **high**. Within the site the field boundary vegetation is retained in some locations. A small section of the internal east-west boundary will be removed to facilitate road access. The north-south hedgerow leading to Knotts Brook will be removed. The proposed masterplan seeks to mitigate the loss of this vegetation through the implementation of additional tree planting with new tree buffers to sections of the north and eastern boundaries and throughout the development along streets and within gardens and areas of public open space.
- 6.21 In considering the susceptibility and value, the overall sensitivity of existing vegetation has been assessed as **high**.
- 6.22 The trees and hedgerows proposed for removal in order to accommodate the development represent a relatively small proportion of those within the surrounding landscape. Of the vegetation present on site, the north-south hedgerow will be removed and a proportion of the east-west hedgerow removed. The majority of the remaining vegetation along the site boundaries will be retained although this is limited to a small number of tree groups and individual trees (see Appendix B, Tree Survey). Significant new numbers of trees are proposed as part of the development. Effects are likely to be perceived at both a site level and within the immediate setting of the site by users of footpath 3-46-FP 25 and receptors in neighbouring dwellings.
- 6.23 During all development phases the magnitude of change is judged to be **high**, resulting in a **moderate/major** adverse landscape effect that is direct, long term and permanent during construction and year 01. As proposed trees throughout the site mature by year 15, in particular strengthening the eastern boundary buffer the landscape effect would fall to minor with a beneficial effect, and would continue to be beneficial in the long term.

Landscape Character

National Landscape Character Assessment

- 6.24 The site falls within National Character Area 35, Lancashire Valleys as shown in Figure 6.
- 6.25 The key characteristics relevant to the site and its immediate vicinity are described as follows:
- “Broad valleys of the rivers Calder and Ribble and their tributaries run north-east 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).

- A broad trough underlain by Carboniferous Coal Measures provided the basis for early industrialisation.
- Field boundaries are regular to the west and more irregular to the east. 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 – for example, at Priestley Clough, Spurn Clough and south of Blackburn. Traditional stone-built weavers’ cottages.
- There are numerous large country houses with associated parklands, particularly on the northern valley sides away from major urban areas.
- There are many examples of proto-industrial heritage, including lime hushings, important turnpike and pack-horse routes involved in the early textile trade, and rural settlements with handloom weavers’ cottages.
- There is evidence of a strong industrial heritage associated with the cotton
- weaving and textile industries, with many common artefacts such as mill buildings, mill lodges and ponds, and links to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.
- The many towns, including Blackburn, Accrington and Burnley, which developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution give the area a strong urban character.
- Robust Victorian architecture of municipal buildings contrasts with the vernacular sandstone grit buildings of the quiet rural settlements on the valley sides.
- Numerous communication routes run along the valley bottoms, including the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, the Preston-Colne railway and the M65 motorway.”

- 6.26 The evidence base provided within the NCA description provides a useful contextual overview of the wider landscape character. However, this scale of character assessment is of limited assistance in considering landscape impacts at a localised level due to its broad coverage.

National Character Area 35 Lancashire Valleys

Note: In most instances, the NCA boundary is not precisely mapped and should be considered as a zone of transition between NCAs.

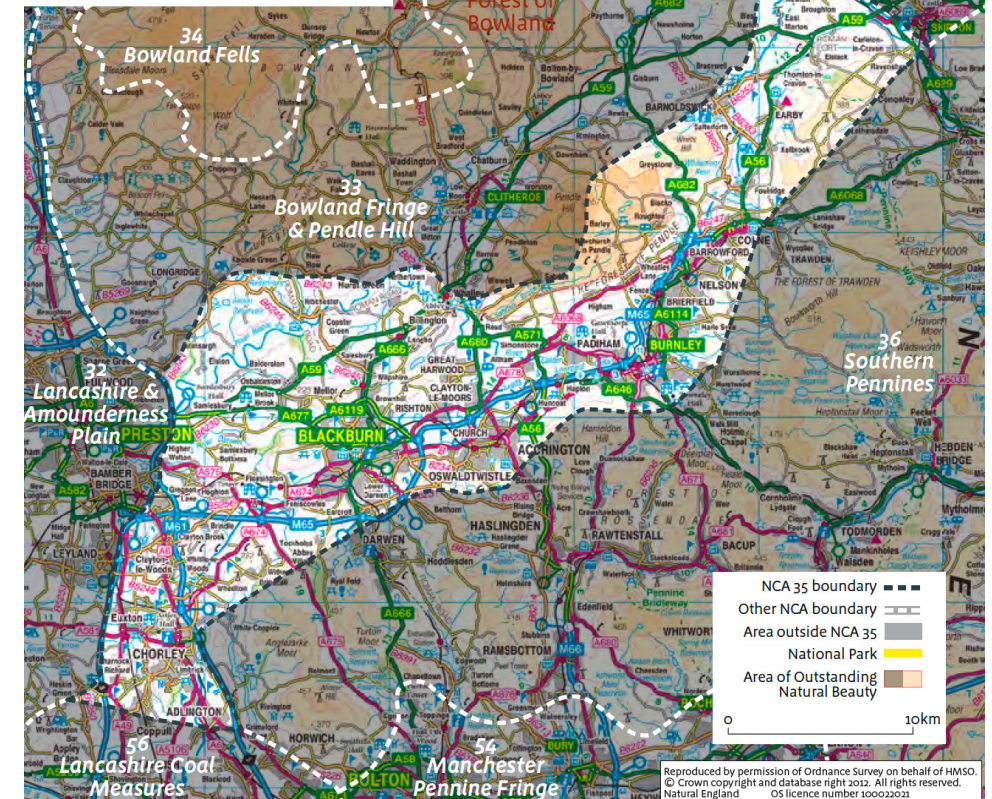


Figure 6: NCA 35, Lancashire Valleys

- 6.27 Although the document has been reviewed as part of the baseline study, it has not been deemed necessary to assess the effects of the proposed development on landscape character at this national scale. As such effects on the NCA are not considered further in this assessment.

A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire (2000)

- 6.28 The assessment identifies 21 landscape character types within the study area and provides landscape management guidelines for each character area.
- 6.29 The site falls within Landscape Character Type 7, Farmed Ridges and falls within Landscape Character Area 7a, Mellor Ridge.
- 6.30 The key characteristics identified in the assessment of relevance to the proposals include (those of most relevance in bold):
- “Rounded ridge profiles of the gritstone outcrops set them apart from the adjacent lowland agricultural landscapes and often provide important buffers between rural and urban landscapes.
 - Mosaic of mixed farmland and woodland forms a textural

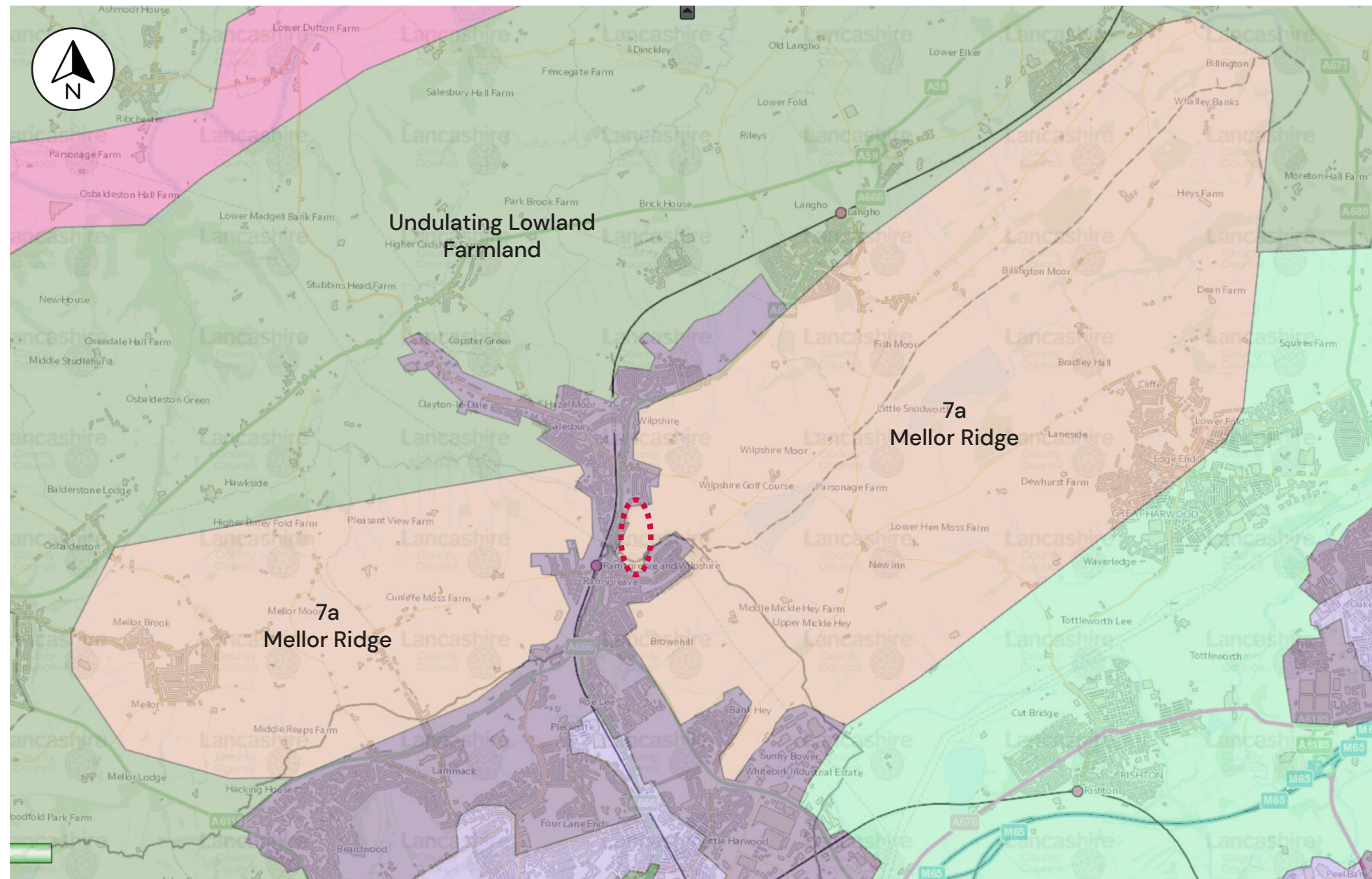


Figure 7: Landscape Character Area Map (MARIO)

Landscape Character Types

Coastal Dunes	Moorland Hills
Coastal Plain	Moorland Plateaux
Drumlin Field	Mosslands
Enclosed Coastal Marsh	Open Coastal Marsh
Enclosed Uplands	Reservoir Valleys
Farmed Ridges	Rolling Upland Farmland
Historic Core	Settled Valleys
Industrial Age	Suburban
Industrial Foothills and Valleys	Undulating Lowland Farmland
Limestone Fells	Valley Floodplains
Low Coastal Drumlins	Wooded Limestone Hills & Pavements
Moorland Fringe	Wooded Rural Valleys

backdrop to the surrounding lowlands. Broadleaved woodlands on the hill sides are important visually as well as supporting valuable fern, bryophyte and bird species.

- Ridge-top settlements and roads, from which there are long views over the surrounding lowlands.
- Distinctive vernacular architecture including stone built villages, farmsteads and short terraces of cottages, reflect the industrial history of these areas.
- In-bye pastures and hay meadows on the upper hill sides form an important element of the farmland mosaic.
- Views over the surrounding lowlands from villages, footpaths, parking places and picnic sites, serve as reminders of the possible early strategic use of the ridges.
- Designed landscapes and country houses, some adapted for new uses, reflect the long history and suitability of the ridges for settlement".

6.31 The assessment identifies local forces for change and their landscape implications:

- "Pressure for ribbon development and large houses on the highly visible ridges may erode the rural character of the landscape backdrop and overall setting of the ridge villages.
- The development of prominent vertical elements, such as communication masts, would be particularly visible and could lead to cluttering of the skyline on the distinctive rounded ridge profile.
- The ongoing decline in woodland cover due to neglect, mismanagement or agricultural intensification could alter the balance of the local landscape pattern; the mosaic of fields and woodland is prominent in views from the surrounding lowlands. The loss of farm woodlands would also lead to a decline in wildlife habitats. However, initiatives such as Elwood may have a significant impact on the landscape through new planting.
- Changes in the agricultural sector leading to the loss of hedgerows and changes in the proportion of landscape elements. The landscape pattern of the Farmed Ridges is similar to that of the Undulating Lowland Farmland, although the upstanding ridge ensures that the former is far more prominent. The Farmed Ridges are therefore particularly sensitive to changes such as hedgerow removal and the amalgamation of fields and farm units. This would also cause a decline in wildlife habitats".

6.32 The landscape strategy highlights the following recommendations (those of relevance to the site and proposals):

“Conserve the character of the ridge settlements

- *new development should reflect the pattern of clustered settlements of local stone buildings and short terraces to counteract the pressures for ribbon development and reflect the characteristic settlement pattern; some settlements (eg Mellor) are clustered, but others are loose-knit, with buildings strung out along ridgetop roads.*
- *consider softening abrupt urban edges with woodland planting which links to the hillside woodlands.*

Maintain the balance of rural landscape elements

- *maintain hedgerows to conserve the historic field pattern*
- *encourage planting of small scale farm woodlands which provide ‘stepping stones’ for wildlife between larger woodlands*
- *conserve the rural setting of individual farms by ensuring new built development does not encroach*

Conserve the hedgerow network to maintain a strong field pattern

- *manage the hedgerow network to ensure it remains intact, particularly where historic field patterns are visible*
- *wherever possible, manage hedgerows for species diversity and wildlife habitats*

Conserve the smooth uncluttered skyline of ridges

- *minimise vertical structures on the skyline*
- *conserve views over the surrounding lowlands*

Conserve the function of the ridge as a rural buffer

- *retain the rural character of the ridge by minimising the use of urban elements such as kerbs and street lights outside settlements*

Enhance hedgerows where they are degraded or gappy

- *plant hedgerow trees to ensure a new generation of trees replace the existing generation*
- *replant degraded sections of hedgerow which contribute significantly to the characteristic overall pattern*

Enhance settlement character

- *ensure new built development respects local materials and styles; stone built farmsteads and village buildings are characteristic*

- *enhance settings to settlements by creating gateways to the settlements and resisting ribbon development*
- *retain views over the lowlands which is an important historic feature of the ridge-top settlements*
- *encourage strategic tree planting as a backdrop to new development; it will form the skyline in many views*

Restore broadleaved woodlands

- *aim to extend woodlands on the ridge sides using native species*
- *encourage the planting of woodlands around settlements to provide enclosure and a rural setting to settlements ...”.*

6.33 The assessment highlights potential indicators for monitoring landscape change identifying: increased clutter from new built development to ridge-top skylines; changes in the proportion of landscape elements due to encroachment of new built development affecting the prominent landscape pattern on hill sides; and loss of vernacular character of settlements due to pressure for new development.

6.34 Recommendations for the site are outlined in the Mitigation section of chapter 4 Description of the proposals, and draw on the points highlighted in the landscape character assessment above.

Character of the site and immediate surroundings

6.35 The site is situated on the lower slopes of the west facing side of a ridge immediately adjacent to the existing settlement edge of Wilpshire. The highest part of the site is on the eastern boundary at +177m AOD, it slopes down to the west and south-west with a low point of +148.5m AOD near to Knotts Brook. The nature of the topography allows long distance views of surrounding ridgelines and valley sides in all directions, to differing degrees depending on the location within the site, comprised of a mixture of settlement interspersed with mature trees, agricultural fields and woodland. These views are more readily available from higher areas of the site but may still be glimpsed from lower areas. The neighbouring settlements of Wilpshire, Blackburn and Mellor can be observed to varying degrees from the site.

6.36 The eastern boundary is fairly open, defined by a drystone wall that has fallen in to disrepair. Views are available over the neighbouring field that rises to a high point to the north-east. The southern section of the eastern boundary has the remnants of a hedgerow. Existing residential properties on Hollowhead Avenue to the north are visible from the site. The southern boundary is defined by the mature trees along Knotts Brook. The western boundary is generally formed of rear garden boundaries

of existing residential properties located off Wilpshire Banks, Whalley Road and Salesbury View. Boundary treatments vary from close board fencing with mature trees, hedgerows and garages located off Salesbury View. A hedgerow runs east-west through the centre of the site along with an overhead pylon running east to west through the southern field.

6.37 The site has a typical edge of settlement character influenced by both the surrounding residential development and the adjacent field and brook. The topography allows longer distance views of ridges, valleys, woodland and settlement. The lower areas of the site feel more enclosed by vegetation, existing built form and landform.

Landscape effects upon Landscape Character Area 7a Mellor Ridge

6.38 The Mellor Ridge landscape character area is described as an area of ridges formed by gritstone outcrops that provide important buffers between rural and urban landscapes. The landscape is a mixture of farmland and woodland that forms “a textural backdrop to the surrounding lowlands”. Ridge-top settlements and roads are also characteristic with views over the surrounding lowlands.

6.39 In terms of value the character area has high recreational value with an extensive network of footpaths. Regional Cycle Route 91 also passes through it. There are two SSSIs located within its boundary, a Scheduled Monument and the edge of two Conservations Areas just fall within the eastern part of the LCA. A large proportion of the LCA is Green Belt. There are several Listed Buildings within its boundaries. There are some areas of ancient woodland located north of Great Harwood. The local plan also designates parts of the LCA as Open Countryside. Other factors that indicate the value of the LCA include the strategy set out in the Landscape Strategy for Lancashire on page 54; conserving the character of the ridge settlements, conserving landscape features such as hedgerows and the smooth, uncluttered skylines of the ridges as well as their function as a rural buffer. The value assigned to the character area is judged to be high.

6.40 The attributes of the character area such as the ridges create a character that feels open in parts with some opportunities for medium to long distance views, whilst on occasion, on ridge sides particularly when coupled with development and mature trees such as along the Whalley Road corridor, the character feels more enclosed. The location of the site on the side of a ridge presents some inter-visibility with surrounding landscape character areas to the west. The part of the character area where the site is located is heavily influenced by the neighbouring suburban area of Wilpshire as well as by other development on nearby ridge sides to the south and west such as that around Parsonage Road

RECEPTOR	SENSITIVITY	MAGNITUDE OF CHANGE	YEAR 01 EFFECT	YEAR 15 EFFECT
LANDSCAPE FEATURES				
Vegetation	High	High	Moderate/Major Adverse	Minor Beneficial
Land use	High	High	Moderate/Major Adverse	Moderate/Major Adverse
Topography	Medium	Medium (at a site scale)	Moderate Adverse	Moderate Adverse
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER				
LCA 7a	Medium	Low (at a whole character area scale)	Minor Adverse	Negligible
Site	High	High	Major Adverse	Major Adverse

Table 1: Summary of Landscape Effects

and in Mellor. Overall the susceptibility to change for the LCA is judged to be **low**.

6.41 The resulting sensitivity for the overall landscape character area based on consideration of susceptibility and value is assessed as **medium**. However this is considered to be lower along some parts of the character area boundaries where it borders existing development with little in the way of vegetation to soften the urban edges.

6.42 In terms of the magnitude of landscape effects, within the wider character area, the proposed development would constitute an extension to the settlement edge associated with Wilpshire. Due to the nature of the landscape and the size and scale of the proposed development, it would be visible from a limited number of places within the character area, mainly, immediately adjacent to the eastern boundary and along the ridge to the south running between Brownhill Farm and Black Low. The character area extends beyond Whalley Road to the west with some visibility of the site available from some locations on this eastern facing ridge side. The development proposals would not be out of character with the locality, with similar built elements running between the eastern and western parts of the character area. When viewing the site from the west, rooftops of the existing residential properties along Whalley Road are often visible amongst mature

trees. The presence of development would be brought further in to the character area to the east. However, with mitigation proposals to the eastern buffer there may be an improvement of the settlement edge, by softening with a stronger vegetated boundary.

6.43 Therefore, the proposals would not constitute an overly adverse element within the wider LCA. In this regard it is noted that the geographical extent of the landscape which would experience the identified long-term effects of the development is generally already influenced by development.

6.44 The proposed development would represent a limited change to the overall landscape character area, as such the magnitude of change is assessed as **low** in Year 01 and Year 15. The overall effect is **moderate/minor** adverse for Year 01. By Year 15 it is expected that the effect would reduce to **minor** adverse and would be direct, long term and permanent. It is noted that the much larger Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Allocation – Local Plan Policy H195 located approximately 400m to the south east also forms part of this character area.

Landscape effects upon the site itself and immediate surroundings (within 200m to the east).

6.45 As previously described the site is located on the lower portions of a west facing side of a ridge that falls down to Whalley Road. The site slopes fairly steeply from the eastern boundary to the west and southern boundaries. There is a row of trees that runs east-west across the centre of the site and another hedgerow running north-south through the southern area of the site. Existing residential development surrounds the site to the north and west and also to the south beyond Knotts Brook. Due to the range in topography the character across the site varies, from higher elevations the site is more open, with longer distance views available. At lower elevations it has a feeling of enclosure from surrounding vegetation, built form and landform.

6.46 The value attached to the site and the area immediately east of it is judged to be **medium**. It is considered to be valued at a community and local level. There are no landscape designations on the site itself. The western extent of the Green Belt boundary runs along the eastern boundary of the site. The location of the site on the settlement edge has an urbanising influence over the site.

6.47 The susceptibility of the landscape character of the site to a residential development of the type proposed is considered to be **high**. Although the character of the site is heavily influenced by surrounding residential properties, the proposal will involve changing a greenfield site to a residential development that occupies a large proportion of the site area. Overall, the sensitivity of the site is judged to be **high**.

6.48 The magnitude of change is judged to be **high** as the development will occupy a large part of the site, introducing built form, associated infrastructure and will involve the removal of some internal boundary vegetation. New planting is proposed to the eastern boundary and throughout the areas of public open space, within gardens and along streets.

6.49 The above assessments result in a **major** level of effect on the character of the site and immediate surroundings to the east during all phases of the development. Adverse effects would be moderated by the appropriate treatment to sensitive boundaries such as mitigation planting within the eastern landscape buffer, the retention of vegetation where possible, the incorporation of open spaces with additional tree planting and tree planting to the street scene and within gardens.