

Rebuttal Statement

I7/00587/OUTMAJ

ERECTION OF UP TO 46 DWELLINGS ON LAND OFF
SCHOOL LANE, FORTON

Prepared for Mr Whittingham

ReLandscape

landscape design + landscape planning

January 2018

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I INTRODUCTION

- I.1 This rebuttal statement has been prepared by ReLandscape Ltd on behalf of Mr Whittingham (the applicant) in response to a Landscape and Visual Assessment and Critique of Development Proposals submitted by Forton Parish Council in relation to planning application reference 17/00587/OUTMAJ.
- I.2 The statement is based on a detailed desk study review of the submitted Landscape and Visual Assessment and Critique of Development Proposals and a field visit to review the findings of the Landscape and Visual Assessment and consider the predicted effects on landscape character and on views including residential views and views from public rights of way. It has been prepared by ReLandscape Ltd, a landscape design and landscape planning consultancy registered with the Landscape Institute, the Royal Chartered body for landscape architects and landscape professionals. The review and field assessment of the proposal was carried out by Dean Blackhurst MSc, BA (Hons), CMLI, an experienced landscape architect and director of ReLandscape Ltd.
- I.3 The report is organised in the following sections:
- **The application:** details of the outline planning application;
 - **Proposed development:** a description of components of the proposed development that are of particular relevance to the appraisal of landscape and visual effects including the landscape strategy;
 - **Baseline conditions:** information on the baseline landscape and visual conditions;
 - **Comments on the submitted Landscape and Visual Assessment and Critique of Development Proposals:** commentary on the findings of the landscape and visual assessment and consideration of the critique of development proposals;
 - **Conclusions:** a summary of the effects of the Development on landscape, townscape and visual amenity.

2 THE APPLICATION

- 2.1 An outline planning application was submitted to Wyre Council on 20 June 2017 by Mr Whittingham for up to 46 dwellings (30% affordable), public open space and associated infrastructure with all matters reserved other than access. The development would be located on farmland off School Lane to the south west of Forton with access provided through Chapel Meadow, a recently completed residential development. The proposed residential development is an irreversible form of development and permanent.
- 2.2 The outline planning application is accompanied by a range of supporting documents and various environmental studies. These include a Design and Access Statement (DAS), a Planning Statement, a Flood Risk Assessment, an Ecological Appraisal, a Transport Assessment and an Arboricultural Implication Assessment. The application also includes various plans including a Topographic Plan (drawing GA3020-TP-01), a Tree Survey Plan (prepared by Arbconsultants Ltd), a Site Location Plan (drawing GA3020-LP-01) and a Site Layout Plan (drawing GA3020-PSP-01-B).

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development parameters

- 3.1 The proposals comprise a residential development of up to 46 dwellings, with access provided off School Lane through the recently completed Chapel Meadow residential development.
- 3.2 At this stage, a possible approach to the proposed scale and form of the development is provided in a Proposed Site Plan (GA Associates drawing GA3020-PSP-01-B – see Appendix I, Figure 1). This illustrates:
- predominantly 2 storey dwellings in a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced;
 - an area of public open space on the north eastern part of the site;
 - retention of existing trees along the southern boundary of the site and within the proposed public open space;
 - retention of existing hedges and trees on the north western, western and southern boundaries of the site; and
 - proposed trees on the site boundaries and within the site.
- 3.3 The final details of the dwellings would be reserved for subsequent approval and the mix and proposed site plan are provided for guidance purposes only.
- 3.4 As part of an outline application, the proposed landscape treatment remains indicative at this stage and it is anticipated that at reserved matters stage details of plant species, arrangement and hard surfacing materials would be undertaken in consultation with Wyre Council's Landscape Officer.

Construction activities

- 3.5 During construction, there would be potential for short-term landscape and visual effects arising from the following activities connected with construction of the Development:
- Creation of temporary compounds;
 - Laying of temporary access tracks;
 - Excavation and levelling;
 - Construction of the new access routes;
 - Connection to services; and
 - Construction of new buildings and surrounding landscape treatment.
- 3.6 A Construction Environmental Management Plan would form part of a reserved matters application submitted pursuant to an outline planning permission.

4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape baseline

National Character Areas

- 4.1 The Development site is within the Lancashire and Amounderness Plain National Character Area (NCA 32). NCA32 is an area of high-grade agricultural land including the northern Fylde (or Amounderness) coastal plain, an ordered landscape of medium-sized fields with field ponds, clipped hedgerows and drainage ditches. This is a medium- to large-scale landscape, where blocks of windsculpted mixed woodland punctuate the relatively flat to gently rolling plain.

A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire: Landscape Character Assessment

- 4.2 The key source of information on landscape character at County level is contained in A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire: Landscape Character Assessment. The site lies within the Landscape Character Type (LCT) 15: Coastal Plain and Character Area (LCA) 15e: Forton-Garstang-Catterall.
- 4.3 The Forton-Garstang-Catterall LCA is described as follows:

This area of lowland farmland forms a transition between the fringes of Catterall, the Bowland Fells and the lowland raised bog of Winnmarleigh. A geological fault runs along the eastern boundary of the area and, although the motorway and railway broadly follow this line, the transition between the Millstone Grits to the east and the sandstones to the west is masked by glacial deposits and river alluvial fans which produce a gently undulating landscape. The area is a rural farmed landscape dominated by improved pasture and scattered with historic halls, farms and woodland. A network of lanes links the villages of Cockerham, Forton, Garstang and Catterall, although the A6 provides a fast route along the length of the character area. Garstang and Catterall have seen a particularly large amount of urban development and this area is affected by urban fringe activities such as golf courses, hotels and schools which have eroded the rural character of the landscape. The area forms a sudden edge with the mosslands at Winmarleigh; stone built houses on this higher land overlook the moss.

Historic Landscape and Designated Cultural Heritage

- 4.4 The Lancashire Historic Landscape Characterisation Programme describes the landscape of the site and surrounding area as Historic Landscape Character (HLC) type Ancient Enclosure comprising an irregular field pattern with sinuous or wavy-edged boundaries and winding lanes and tracks connecting a dispersed pattern of isolated farmsteads and small villages/ hamlets. Fields are irregularly shaped with most less than 3 hectares in area. Boundaries are varied and may comprise hedges, ditches and drystone walls or combinations thereof.
- 4.5 Designated cultural heritage in the vicinity of the site is limited to four grade II listed buildings associated with the United Reformed Church on School Lane which is 225m to the east of the site. These are: Tomb of James Aray, south-east of United Reformed Church; Mounting Block in Courtyard Wall of United Reformed Church; United Reformed Church; and Building in Churchyard north-west of United Reformed Church.
- 4.6 Listed Buildings and their settings enjoy protection under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The setting of a heritage asset is defined as 'the surroundings in

which a heritage asset is experienced' and this includes 'all of the surroundings from which the heritage asset can be experienced or that can be experienced from or with the heritage asset'. There is no visual connection between these listed buildings and the site.

Landscape features on site

- 4.7 The site comprises an arable field surrounded by pasture fields to the south and west, a cricket field to the north and a minor road and the village of Thornton to the east. It comprises a commercial crop with only infrequent arable weeds.
- 4.8 Intact hedges and fences form the boundaries of the site. The hedges are species poor and contain a low diversity of woody plant species limited to Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*). A section of hedge on the south boundary is assessed as category A in accordance with BS5837:2012 Table I – Cascade chart for tree quality assessment. All other hedges are assessed as category C.
- 4.9 There are several individual mature Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) trees with and on the boundaries of the site. The trees do not form woodland or copses. There are four trees within the field with three assessed as category B and one as category C in accordance with BS5837:2012 Table I – Cascade chart for tree quality assessment. There are 10 trees on the southern boundary with three assessed as category B and seven as category C. One tree located at the intersection of the north and west boundaries is assessed as category U and recommended for felling.
- 4.10 The site is gently undulating with a broad gentle valley running approximately north south between two minor hillocks to the east and west. Levels rise from a low point of 24.8m approximating to the centre of the north boundary to approximately 27.3m at the intersection of the north and west boundaries. Slopes across the site generally vary between 1:20 and 1:60.

Landscape character of the site and surrounds (up to 1km)

- 4.11 The site and its surrounds comprise a rural landscape of gently undulating lowland farmland divided by low clipped hedges. Woodland blocks, isolated individual trees and hedgerow trees punctuate this relatively flat and gently rolling landscape. At a local level the site forms parts of a pattern of irregular fields bound by Stoney Lane and School Lane to the north, Winder Lane to the east, Ratcliffe Wharf Lane to the south and Lancaster Canal to the west. Residential development within the village of Forton including Chapel Meadow is predominantly detached and semi-detached two storey houses and bungalows and forms the setting of the site to the north-east.
- 4.12 Figure 2 in Appendix I illustrates the existing character of the site.
- 4.13 Key landscape attributes of the site and surrounding area (up to 1km) are:

Landform and topography

- 4.14 The gently rolling landform of the site and surrounding area sits above bedrock geology of Crossdale Mudstone – Mudstone formed approximately 323 to 328 million years ago in the Carboniferous Period. Glacial and post-glacial deposits of clays, sands and marine alluvium have completely masked the bedrock geology. The landform is strongly influenced by the

surface drift which constitutes boulder clay, penetrated by pockets of glacial sand and gravel and deposits of post-glacial blown sand.

- 4.15 The topography of the area surrounding the site is illustrated by the contours on the OS map in Figure 3 in Appendix I.

Landscape pattern and complexity

- 4.16 The site and surrounding landscape has a simple landscape pattern created by the predominant land use, which is dairy farming on improved pasture. The historic pattern of ancient field enclosure on the west side of School Lane is defined by low clipped hedges and occasional hedgerow trees.
- 4.17 There are occasional small scale broadleaf woodlands, individual broadleaf trees and broadleaf hedgerow trees. Field ponds are a characteristic feature of the area.

Relationship to existing settlement edge

- 4.18 The village of Forton lies immediately to the north east of the site on landform which is approximately level with the surrounding agricultural land. Chapel Meadow, a small residential development comprising 12 dwellings, sits on the north east boundary of the site. The edge of Forton influences the site and is visible in close range views from viewpoints to the north-east, east and south-east of the site.
- 4.19 The field pattern and landscape structure of the site and its surrounding are partly eroded by the cricket ground to the north which comprises a cricket field, pavilion and scoreboard.
- 4.20 The site and surrounding landscape contributes to the setting of Forton and the undulating farmland to the east but is not overly distinctive. There are several human scale features including woodland blocks, individual trees and farmsteads to the west of the site, buildings on the cricket ground and the built edge of Forton to the east.

Aesthetic qualities

- 4.21 The main land use is dairy farming on improved pasture but the site is an arable field. There are a number of individual farms which manage the broad areas of pasture and arable fields. The lack of activity within the agricultural land generally results in a degree of tranquillity away from the edge of Forton and the A6 to the south.
- 4.22 Farming is connected to Forton as arable and pasture fields extend up to the edge of the settlement area where traffic noise from School Lane becomes intrusive. Consequently, there is less of a sense of tranquillity and a stronger urban-edge perception to the fields adjacent to School Lane.

Visual sensitivities and intervisibility

- 4.23 The interplay of topography and vegetation cover in the landscape surrounding the site provides a high level of screening with open views of the site limited to close range viewpoints on the western edge of School Lane and elevated land to the north. The built form of Forton itself serves to screen views of the site from the east. The topography of the landscape to the north of the site restricts views of the site from distant viewpoints and residential properties

to the north.

- 4.24 To the south of the site, views from School Lane approaching the site are partially screened by existing dwellings and trees associated with a field pond. The Chapel Meadow residential development on the west side of School Lane interrupts views of the site from the south.
- 4.25 To the west and south, there are viewpoints providing an open view of the site from public footpaths on the west and south boundaries.
- 4.26 To the north rising landform and a belt of trees interrupt views from a group of houses on the west side of School Lane.

Visual baseline

- 4.27 Areas and locations from which the development would be visible have been identified from map interpretation and visual envelope mapping on site.

Receptors of visual effects

- 4.28 The people (visual receptors) within the study area who may be affected by potential changes in views and visual amenity arising from the development include:
- Residents at home in properties on School Lane;
 - Motorists and pedestrians using School Lane; and
 - User of public footpaths on the south and west boundaries of the site.
- 4.29 The most sensitive visual receptors include residents at home, particularly in properties immediately adjacent to the site, and people engaged in outdoor recreation including users of public rights of way.
- 4.30 Site assessment and field work identified significant areas of mature vegetation both on the site boundaries and within the surrounding landscape which together with undulating topography offer screening of potential views of the site. The settlement of Forton interrupts potential views of the site from viewpoints to the east of the settlement.
- 4.31 A schedule of three viewpoints is selected to illustrate: the visual capacity of the landscape to absorb the development; and those visual receptors that would be affected by changes in their views. The viewpoints are in addition to those in the Landscape and Visual Assessment and Critique of Development Proposals and are within a 0.5km radius of the site as illustrated in Figure 3 in Appendix I. The viewpoints provide: views in the short- distance range; all are publicly accessible; and they represent a range of visual receptor type and sensitivity.
- 4.32 **Table I** provides details of viewpoints that were not chosen for the assessment of visual effects in the Landscape and Visual Assessment and Critique of Development Proposals (the Report).

Table 1: Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Name/Location/Proximity	Rationale for Selection
1	School Lane adjacent to Oak Lodge Grid reference: 348600E 451303N	Representative of view of residents at home in Oak Lodge on School Lane.
2	School Lane Grid reference: 348470E 451404N	Representative of view of motorists and pedestrians approaching the site from the north-west on School Lane.
3	Shireshead & Forton Cricket Club (seat on north boundary of cricket pitch) Grid reference: 348440E 451363N	Representative of view of users of the cricket ground.

- 4.33 Viewpoint 1 (see Appendix I, Figure 4) illustrates the view of residents at home in Oak Lodge on School Lane which is directly opposite the site. These visual receptors are considered to have a high sensitivity to a change in their view. The existing view is influenced by the recently completed Chapel Meadow housing development. The proposed development would be seen beyond Chapel Meadow but would not be a contrasting element in the view.
- 4.34 Viewpoint 2 (see Appendix I, Figure 5) illustrates the view of motorists approaching the site from the north-west on School Lane. These visual receptors are considered to have a medium sensitivity to a change in their view. The existing view is across the Shireshead & Forton Cricket Club ground and is influenced by associated buildings and cricket infrastructure including nets, covers and sight screen. The proposed development would be visible beyond the cricket ground and partially screened by existing trees on the site. Some buildings within the development would be set against a background of mature trees associated with a pond on the site.
- 4.35 Viewpoint 3 (see Appendix I, Figure 6) illustrates the view of spectators using seats located on the north boundary of the cricket pitch. These visual receptors are considered to have a medium sensitivity to a change in their view due to their focus of attention being on a cricket match. The existing view is across the cricket pitch and is influenced by a pavilion, scoreboard and cricket infrastructure including nets, covers and sight screen as well as dwellings in the Chapel Meadow development. The proposed development would be visible beyond the cricket ground partially screened by existing trees on the site but would not be a contrasting element in the view. Some buildings within the development would be set against a background of mature trees associated with a pond on the site.

5 COMMENTS ON THE SUBMITTED LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT AND CRITIQUE OF DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The Landscape and Visual Assessment and Critique of Development Proposals (herein referred to as ‘the Report’) provides an assessment and rebuttal of the proposed development. It focuses on the sensitivity of the landscape and townscape to the development and the capacity of the landscape and townscape to accommodate the development.
- 5.2 ‘Landscape capacity’ is used to describe the ability of a landscape to accommodate different amounts of change or development of a specific type, so a ‘Capacity Study’ is on a large scale and would look at the most suitable areas for a development such as housing. ‘Landscape sensitivity’ is usually site specific and looks at the ability of a landscape to absorb change for a particular type of development proposal.
- 5.3 There is no acknowledgement in the Report of the application being for outline planning permission. The lack of detailed proposals provided in the application means that an assessment of the likely effects can only be made in very broad terms. For an outline application it is appropriate to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal to identify the landscape and visual issues of a potential development and to inform the design process. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is undertaken when a development proposal has been finalised and detailed proposals are available to illustrate the precise form, nature design and scale of the development.

Methodology

- 5.4 It is stated in paragraph 2.1 that the assessment methodology used for the Report follows the broad guidance in the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (GLVIA3) and a broad approach is set out in Table 1. The detailed methodology in Appendix 2 is not in the Report provided on Wyre Council’s online planning register.
- 5.5 In regard to the sensitivity of landscape receptors (aspects of the landscape resource of the site and surrounding landscape) to a development proposal, GLVIA3 recommends an evaluation which combines judgements on the susceptibility of a receptor to change and the value attached to the landscape. The Report methodology does not define any criteria as a basis for assessing susceptibility to the proposed development. No landscape receptors sensitive to residential development are identified. Similarly, no criterion is provided for judging the value of a landscape receptor.
- 5.6 A three point sensitivity scale is defined and set out Table 1. For a site specific assessment it is considered that a more detailed sensitivity scale would be appropriate.

Landscape and Visual Baseline

- 5.7 The Report contains a thorough description of the site and its surroundings, including landscape features and landscape character. The landscape character baseline includes reference to relevant published assessments including National and County landscape character assessments, and notes the key characteristics of the relevant landscape character types. The Report also provides a description of the main features of the site and its context.

- 5.8 The visual baseline makes no reference to the extent of visibility with reference to a Zone of Theoretical Visibility. Representative viewpoints are set out and are considered to be appropriate to capture the range and extent of likely visual effects of the development.

Townscape and Historical Growth Analysis

- 5.9 A description of the growth of Forton from 1847 to the present day based on an interpretation of historical maps is provided in the Report. The site is considered to be disconnected from the village other than from the Chapel Meadow residential development recently constructed adjacent to the east boundary. It is judged that the development would be a very large expansion in the historical context of the village in a direction without any historical precedent.
- 5.10 No description of the townscape that is distinctive to Forton, supported by materials such as maps, illustrations and photographs, is included in the Report. It provides an understanding of how Forton has evolved and developed over time without discussing how this is reflected in the layout of streets, the architecture of buildings and the materials used. As such the Report does not provide an understanding of the intrinsic character and qualities of Forton that can then be used to guide the location, design, scale, massing and type of development.
- 5.11 A settlement profile prepared by Wyre Council as part of the local plan evidence base provides a brief description of Forton:

Forton is a small and compact rural settlement that lies within a broad coastal plain immediately west of the A6 and north of Garstang. The built form is dominated by a relatively modern low density housing stock largely developed in the 1960s but also includes a school and listed church. The housing stock has increased by 15% between 2001 and 2011 and is almost entirely in the form of houses and bungalows over 70% of which are of 3 or 4+ bed construction. The wider area – including land immediately adjacent the west of the settlement – contains a number of farm holdings.

- 5.12 The Report does not consider the 2001 to 2011 housing stock growth or the character of housing constructed during this timeframe.
- 5.13 There is no judgement on the sensitivity of the townscape to the proposed development using a combination of value and susceptibility to change.

Landscape and Visual Baseline Summary and Statement on Sensitivity and Capacity

- 5.14 A summary of the landscape and visual baseline is provided in the Report which identifies the following landscape receptors:
- gently rolling topography.
 - medium to small scale field systems.
 - hedge and hedgerow field boundaries.
 - a relatively strong sense of tranquillity.
- 5.15 No reference is made to the following landscape receptors identified at a site visit undertaken in January 2018:

- woodland blocks, individual trees and farmsteads.
- occasional small scale broadleaf woodlands.
- proximity of modern development on western edge of Forton.
- localised impact of School Lane on tranquillity.

5.16 Visual receptors that have the potential to be affected by the development are identified including users of principle routes in the village, users of the cricket ground and users of public rights of way. No consideration is given to the views of residents at home.

Sensitivity

5.17 The Report judges the Forton landscape and townscape to have medium-high sensitivity to the proposed development. This is not based on an evaluation which is the product of the susceptibility of a receptor to change and the value attached to the landscape as recommend by GLVIA3.

5.18 If landscape susceptibility is related to the physical attributes of the landscape identified in 5.10 and 5.11 above then there are aspects of the site and surrounding landscape which indicate a medium susceptibility (where undue consequences may occur) to the proposed residential development including:

- presence of human scale features.
- absence of strong topographical variety.
- close to visible signs of human activity and development.
- presence of modern housing development on east boundary of site.
- proximity of cricket pavilion and scoreboard.

5.19 In regard to landscape value, the site and surrounding area are not located within a nationally designated landscape. Wyre Local Plan Policy SPI 3 - Countryside covers the site and surrounding area.

5.20 The landscape is on the edge of Forton and is influenced by residential properties opposite the site on the west side of Forton and immediately adjacent to the site on Chapel Meadow. This urban edge contrasts with the landscape character of the mixed farmland to the west of the site.

5.21 Landscape features on the site have low ecological significance (see submitted Ecological Appraisal prepared by Envirotech). There are a number of intact hedges on the site boundaries which are species poor and contain a low diversity of woody plant species. None of the hedgerows are classified as important under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997). Trees on the boundaries of the site are of moderate quality.

5.22 Experience of the landscape is important in visual terms to residents in properties on School Lane. The buildings on the west boundary of the site and associated with the cricket ground are part of the experience. There is public access on footpaths along the south and west boundaries of the site.

5.23 Landscape value is defined by ReLandscape Ltd using the following scale:

- High: Internationally or nationally valued landscapes (World Heritage Sites, National Parks, areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty);
- Medium: Designated and locally valued landscapes (local authority landscape designations); and
- Low: Landscapes not nationally or locally designated but locally valued.

5.24 On balance, the value of the site and surrounding landscape is considered to be low.

5.25 The landscape sensitivity of the site to the proposed development informed by a combination of susceptibility to change and landscape value is therefore judged to be medium-low. The majority of the landscape characteristics are unlikely to be adversely affected by the proposed development. Although the development could potentially be accommodated, care would still be needed in locating and designing the change in the landscape. There is an opportunity to retain existing field boundaries and individual trees on the site as a framework for the development and introduce new tree planting using native species within and on the fringes of the development to improve views and approaches to the existing built edge of Forton. The landscape strategy for the Coastal Plain LCT recommends initiating programmes of tree planting, particularly on the fringes of settlements and in locations where trees will help to screen infrastructure and other developments

5.26 The Report does not consider the susceptibility of visual receptors to changes in views and general visual amenity which is typically a function of the activity of people experiencing the view and the extent to which their attention is likely to be focused on the view.

5.27 ReLandscape Ltd considers residents at home and people engaged in outdoor activities whose attention is focused on the landscape or particular views e.g. users of public rights of way, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to their experiences to have a high susceptibility to a change in their views. Road users where views of the surroundings form an incidental contribution to the journey are considered to have a medium susceptibility and people engaged in the playing of cricket, which does not involve an appreciation of views of the landscape, a low susceptibility.

Capacity

5.28 The Report considers the capacity of Forton for further change and growth in the context of the characteristics of the historic and existing village and surrounding landscape. The capacity to accommodate the development is judged to be low due to the likelihood of adverse effects on:

- Hedgerow and mature tree boundaries
- Intimate scale and historic form of Forton
- Small scale field systems in an intimate rolling, rural landscape
- Open and expansive views from the cricket ground and public rights of way

5.29 The Site Layout Plan submitted with the planning application does not require the removal of any hedgerow or individual trees on the site. In order to satisfy Lancashire County Council

Highways requirement for a 2m footpath along the School Lane, three category B and one category C tree would be removed on the east boundary.

- 5.30 The site and surrounding landscape is a mostly open landscape with few landscape features vulnerable to the proposed development. With the exception of four trees on the east boundary, all existing trees, hedges and hedgerows would be retained as part of the landscape framework for the development.
- 5.31 The farmland to the west of Forton is a mostly simple and monotonous landscape, with a pattern of ancient field enclosure. The development would be contained in a single field and change the character of a small proportion of farmland currently used for arable crops to the west of Forton.
- 5.32 Adverse effects of views from the cricket ground could be addressed in locating and designing the development in the landscape.

The Proposals and Assessment of Impact

- 5.33 The Report identifies a number of likely effects of the development on the landscape and visual resources of the site and surrounding landscape.
- 5.34 Paragraph 6.1 considers the development site to be disconnected from the village and harmful to the visual amenity of the cricket ground. The proposed development would be physically and visually connected to the existing Chapel Meadow residential development on the western edge of Forton. There is a precedent for development to the west of School Lane set by residential developments on Spring Vale and Chapel View, the United Reformed Church, Forton Primary School and the pavilion and scoreboard at the cricket ground. Users of the cricket ground are considered to have a low susceptibility to a change in their view as they are engaged in an activity which does not involve an appreciation of a view of the development site.
- 5.35 Paragraphs 6.2 and 6.5 suggest there has been no consideration of the landscape and visual effects of the development in the submitted Design and Access Statement. The submitted Site Layout Plan is indicative and there would be an opportunity to address any adverse landscape and visual effects arising from the appearance, layout and scale of the development through reserved matters. The Report itself has not considered the landscape sensitivity of the site to the proposed development in line with guidance in GLVIA3. In paragraphs 5.13 to 5.21 above, landscape sensitivity is judged to be medium low based on an evaluation which is the product of the susceptibility of a receptor to change and the value attached to the landscape.
- 5.36 Paragraph 6.7 considers the submitted Site Layout Plan to lack a connection with Forton. Detailed proposals to illustrate the precise form, nature, design and scale of the development would be submitted as part of a reserved matters application and only at this stage would it be possible to assess whether the development has a sense of place. The indicative layout proposes:

- predominantly 2 storey dwellings in a mix of detached, semi-detached and terraced – reflecting existing dwelling types in Forton;
- an area of public open space on the north eastern part of the site – related to the setting of the cricket ground;
- retention of existing trees along the southern boundary of the site and within the proposed public open space – retaining landscape elements common to the Forton-Garstang-Catterall landscape character area;
- retention of existing hedges and trees on the north western, western and southern boundaries of the site – retaining landscape elements common to the Forton-Garstang-Catterall landscape character area; and
- proposed trees on the site boundaries and within the site – to implement a strategy for the Coastal Plain landscape character type to introduce new tree planting using native species within and on the fringes of the development to improve views and approaches to the built edge of Forton .

5.37 Paragraph 6.8 states that a landscape and visual assessment has been undertaken to inform the Report. As stated above, the assessment has not considered the susceptibility of landscape and visual receptors to change in combination with the value of the landscape or views to determine landscape and visual sensitivity in line with guidance in GLVIA3. There has also been no consideration of the magnitude of landscape and visual effects.

5.38 Paragraphs 6.9 to 6.11 consider the likely visual effects of the development from eight viewpoints representing users of School Lane, users of public rights of way adjacent to the south and west boundaries of the site and users of the cricket ground. No plan showing the location of the viewpoints and no grid references are provided. The effect on views of residents at home in properties on School Lane has not been considered.

5.39 Paragraph 6.9 considers the development to have an adverse effect on visual receptors in View 1 by ‘pushing the development out into open countryside, blocking views and changing the appearance and from of the village’. No assessment of the effect is provided. Part of the development would be a noticeable element of the view and would be largely screened by a detached dwelling in the foreground. Existing dwellings are a component of the view so the development would not be a contrasting element. Existing trees on the south boundary of the site would partially screen the development and new tree planting on this boundary could, at maturity, further interrupt the view. As set out in paragraph 5.23 above, users of School Lane are considered to have a medium susceptibility to a change in their view. The magnitude of change would be medium resulting in a moderate, adverse effect. Mitigation planting on the south boundary of the site could reduce the magnitude of change to low at maturity with resultant moderate, beneficial effect.

5.40 Paragraph 6.9 also considers the development to have an adverse effect on visual receptors in View 4 for the same reason as View 1. No assessment of the effect is provided. Part of the development would be a noticeable element of the view between the cricket pavilion and dwellings in the Chapel Meadow development. Existing dwellings and the cricket pavilion are a component of the view so the development would not be a contrasting element. Existing

mature trees within the cricket ground would partially screen the development and new tree planting on the north boundary of the development site could, at maturity, further interrupt the view. As set out in paragraph 5.23 above, users of School Lane are considered to have a medium susceptibility to a change in their view. The magnitude of change would be medium resulting in a moderate, adverse effect. Mitigation planting on the north boundary of the site could reduce the magnitude of change to low at maturity with a resultant moderate, beneficial effect.

- 5.41 Paragraph 6.10 considers the development to have a substantial adverse effect on visual receptors using the public footpaths on the south and west boundaries of the site (Views 2, 3, 7 and 8). Part of footpath 2-11-FP7 would become part of the proposed development. As set out in paragraph 5.23 above, users of public rights of way are considered to have a high susceptibility to a change in their view as their attention is focused on the landscape. As the development would present a major alteration to the views due to the proximity of the public footpaths to the development site, the magnitude of visual effect on visual receptors would be high resulting in a very substantial, adverse visual effect. A green open space incorporating tree planting between the public footpaths and the built elements of the development could reduce this visual effect.
- 5.42 Paragraph 6.11 considers the development to have an adverse effect on Views 5 and 6 from the cricket ground. The cricket ground, rather than users of it, is judged to have a medium sensitivity to change. The development is judged to be a large change in the view resulting in moderate-substantial, adverse visual effect. In View 5 there would be a noticeable alteration of the view and the development would be a noticeable element of the view which would contrast with existing landscape elements in the view. As set out in paragraph 5.23 above, users of the cricket ground are engaged in the playing a sport which does not involve an appreciation of views of the landscape and so have a low susceptibility to a change in their view. The magnitude of change would be high due to the close proximity of the development resulting in a moderate, adverse visual effect.
- 5.43 In View 6 there would be a noticeable alteration to view and the development would be a noticeable element of the view. Existing dwellings on Chapel Meadow are a component of the view so the development would not be a contrasting element. As set out in paragraph 5.23 above, users of the cricket ground are engaged in the playing a sport which does not involve an appreciation of views of the landscape and so have a low susceptibility to a change in their view. The magnitude of change would be high due to the close proximity of the development resulting in a moderate, adverse visual effect.

Summary and Conclusions

- 5.44 The Report states that at a National and Regional level the landscape has a medium sensitivity to the development. A Landscape Strategy for Lancashire Landscape Character Assessment does not include an assessment of the sensitivity of landscape character areas to residential development. A Landscape Sensitivity to Wind Energy Development in Lancashire Study produced by Derek Lovejoy, Birmingham Ltd. (February 2005) assessed the Forton-Garstang-Catterall landscape character area to have a moderate low sensitivity to wind energy development. Based on this assessment, the sensitivity of the Forton-Garstang-Catterall landscape character area to housing development could be considered to be at most moderate low sensitivity.
- 5.45 At the local level the Report considers the landscape, townscape and visual amenity of Forton to be of medium-high sensitivity to the proposed development. This assessment does not reflect the guidance in GLVIA3 on determining landscape and visual sensitivity as a product of the susceptibility of a landscape/ visual receptor to change and the value attached to a landscape/ view.
- 5.46 Land cover consists largely of open fields, but with a reduced sense of openness due to undulating topography, occasional woodland blocks and trees within fields and hedgerows. There is a sense of openness in the field in which the development is proposed; however this does not extend far beyond the boundaries. The landscape is visually prominent and open from the edge of Forton, with strong intervisibility between the settlement edge and farmland to the west. The open character of the site reduces landscape sensitivity to residential development.
- 5.47 A simple landscape largely comprising arable and pasture fields creates little variation in landscape pattern and complexity. A landscape framework is established by the historic pattern of ancient field enclosure which is defined by low clipped hedges and occasional hedgerow trees. A contrast is provided immediately outside of the site, with the Chapel Meadow residential development on the east boundary and the cricket ground on the north boundary adding a variation to the landscape pattern and additional settlement edge influence. The simplicity of the landscape pattern would have medium-low landscape sensitivity to residential development.
- 5.48 There are few intrusions within the landscape which impact on experiential character. Detracting features acting on the landscape and reducing landscape sensitivity are indirect and result from those features outside of the site, such as the cricket ground and settlement edge of Forton. The site is crossed in part by a public right of way from Forton and this would be sensitive due to the recreational interest of users. Overall, there would be medium-low landscape sensitivity to residential development in experiential terms.
- 5.49 The site is connected to and intervisible with the modern, largely open settlement edge of Forton, to the east. As described above, the site is also intervisible with a number of other development influences, such as the cricket ground and the Chapel Meadow residential development, resulting in medium-low landscape sensitivity to residential development.
- 5.50 Open views are afforded across the site for visual receptors with a high susceptibility to a change in their view. Visual sensitivity to residential development is substantial-moderate due

to the open character of the site and proximity of visual receptors.

- 5.51 Overall landscape sensitivity to residential development is judged to be medium-low. Although the landscape has few sensitive landscape features, sensitivity is elevated due to visual issues.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Landscape and Visual Assessment and Critique of Development Proposals (the Report) submitted by Forton Parish Council in relation to planning application reference 17/00587/OUTMAJ presents an assessment of the landscape, townscape and visual effects which are predicted to result from the erection of 46 dwellings on land at School Lane Lane in the settlement of Forton (the Development).
- 6.2 The assessment partly follows good practice guidance as set out in the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Assessment's Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition (2013). The sensitivity evaluation does not combine judgements on the susceptibility of a receptor to change and the value attached to the landscape.

Landscape effects

- 6.3 In terms of sensitivity of the landscape resource arising from the proposed residential development, the Report reviews a range of published character assessments and draws the following conclusion in regard to the sensitivity of the application site:
- No sensitivity is given for the National and Regional landscape descriptions but both landscape types and sub areas (Lancashire and Amounderness Plain and Hollins Lane to Forton) demonstrate a landscape that is at least of medium sensitivity to change.*
- 6.4 This conclusion is not agreed with as it overestimates receptor sensitivity (considered to be medium-low). No consideration is given to the physical attributes of the site and its surroundings which reduce sensitivity to change.
- 6.5 The assessment of effects should consider the overall development including any measures to mitigate effects.
- 6.6 Where planting works are proposed in mitigation it is standard practice to prepare assessments that reflect the position on completion of the development (Year 1) and at a later date, typically Year 15, in order to take account of the growth of the planting and its effectiveness in reducing effects. The Report does not provide different assessments of magnitude over time nor does it consider the benefits of additions to the landscape resource that would arise from mitigation planting.
- 6.7 The direct effect of the development on four trees to accommodate a new adoptable footpath to Lancashire County Council standards on School Lane is not identified in the Report. Compensatory trees would be planted in the pond area not less than 1:1 ratio by new trees.
- 6.8 Effects of the development on landscape character are considered in broad terms stating the development would *affect the character and appearance of the village of Forton*. The Report does not take into account the presence of dwellings and other buildings as components of existing landscape character. At the broader scale of Landscape Character Area 15e: Forton-Garstang-Catterall, the Report does not consider the effect of the development on a relatively small part of a wider area of farmland.

Townscape effects

- 6.9 Forton is not designated as a conservation area and there are only four listed buildings in the settlement, all Grade II listed and within the curtilage of the United Reformed Church. There is no visual connection between the development site and the United Reformed Church so the effect of the development would be no change on the setting of the listed buildings.
- 6.10 The built form in the village is dominated by a relatively modern low density housing stock largely developed in the 1960s but also includes a school and the United Reformed Church. The housing stock is almost entirely in the form of houses and bungalows. The development would introduce housing of a form and scale characteristic of Forton.
- 6.11 Development exists on the east side of School Lane in the form of the cricket ground, the Chapel Meadow and Spring Vale residential developments, individual detached dwellings, the primary school and the United Reformed Church. The enclosed character of the landscape beyond the development site has a reduced visual sensitivity due to the greater level of visual screening afforded which would provide capacity for further development to the west of School Lane.

Visual effects

- 6.12 The assessment of effects for eight viewpoints in the Report is not considered reliable due to:
- inconsistent judgement of sensitivity of visual receptors (no sensitivity judgement cricket ground users or motorists).
 - use of inappropriately high sensitivity assessment for cricket ground users (considered to be low).
- 6.13 Buildings including residential properties are a component of views from a number of the viewpoints. These are not considered in the report. The development would include buildings and landscape elements already present in, and characteristic of, the existing landscape and settlement near the site. Set against the residential properties on the western edge of Forton, dwellings in the development would not be a new feature in views from viewpoints to the north, west and south of the site.
- 6.14 Receptors with a high sensitivity to changes in their views are residents at home, people engaged in outdoor activities whose attention is focused on the landscape or particular views e.g. users of public rights of way and visitors to heritage assets, where views of the surroundings are an important contributor to their experiences. The worst case effect would be on high sensitivity receptors using the public footpaths on the boundaries of the site. The introduction of green open space incorporating tree planting between the public footpaths and the built elements of the development could reduce the visual effect.

Conclusion

- 6.15 It is considered that the proposed development of up to 46 dwellings is of a scale and nature which with appropriate landscape mitigation could be successfully accommodated within the local landscape and townscape without any unacceptable landscape, townscape or visual effects.
- 6.16 The application is for outline planning permission which presents an opportunity in the determination of a reserved matters application to guide the form and layout of the proposals in response to the local vernacular and existing landscape and village character.

Appendix I

Figures



Figure 1

Proposed Site Plan

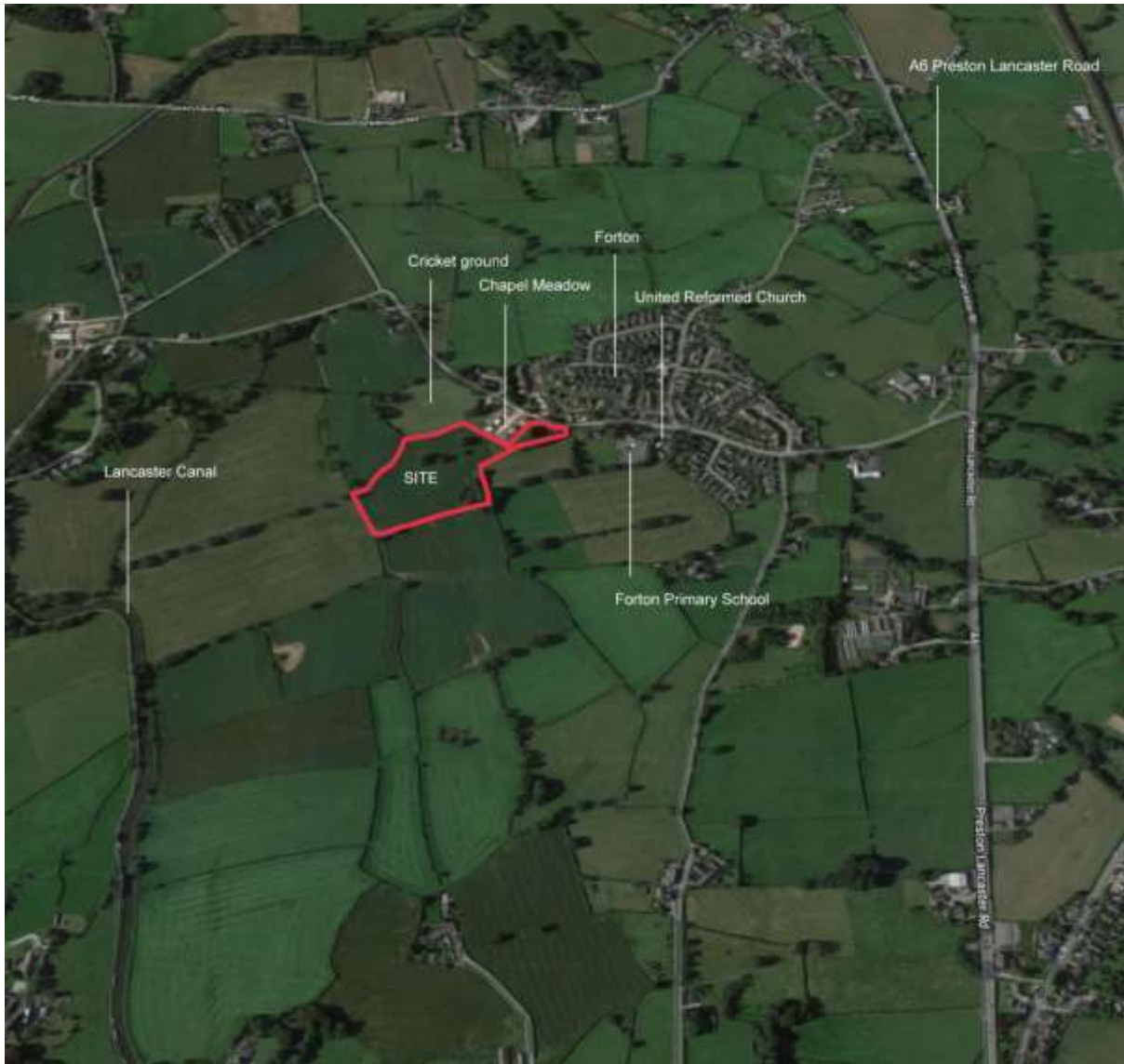
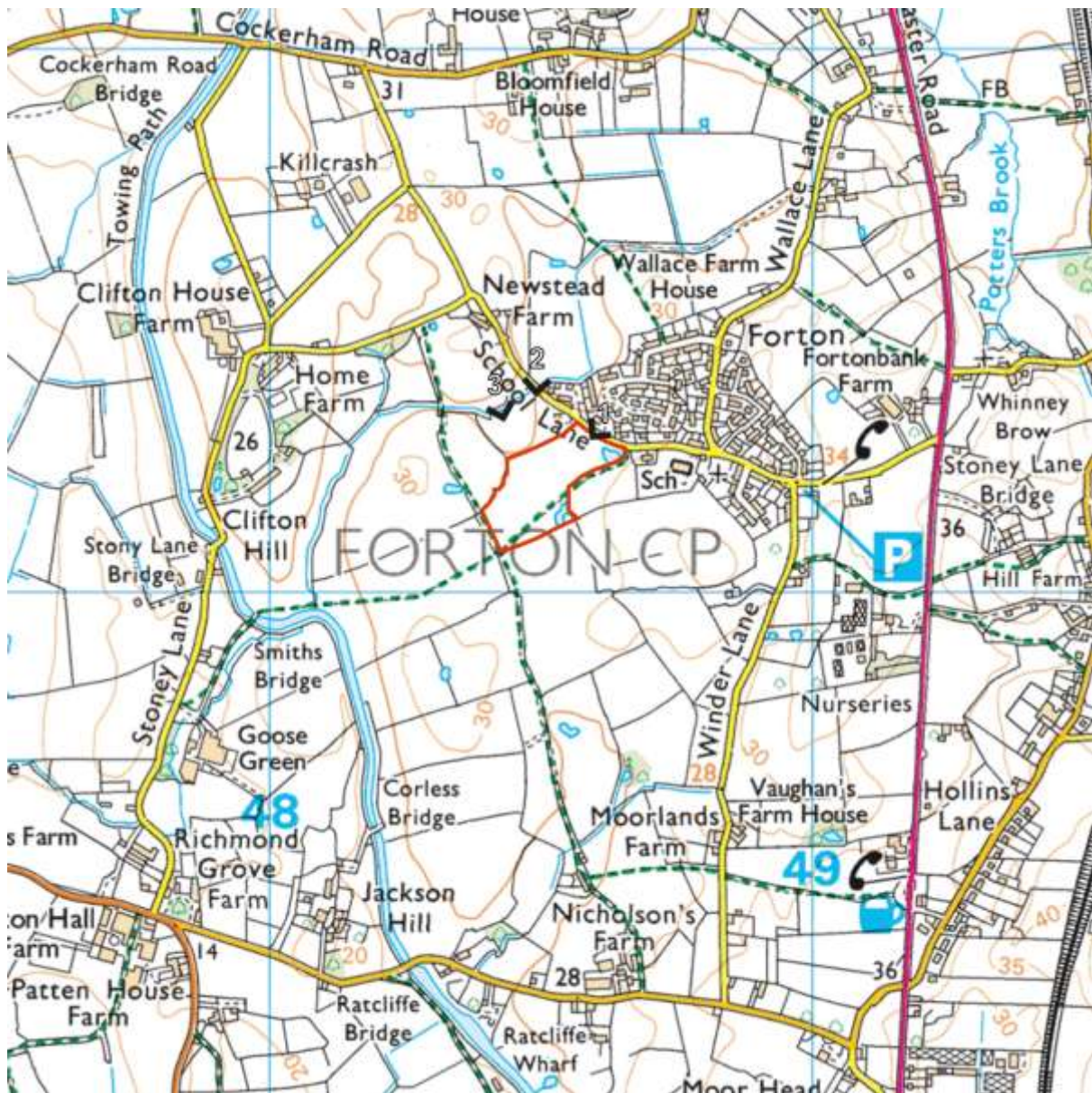


Figure 2
Existing Landscape Character



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Figure 3

Viewpoint Location Plan

SITE EXTENT

Dwellings in Chapel Meadow



Viewpoint information

Grid reference	348600E 451303N
Distance to site boundary	70m
Camera used	Canon EOS 5D Mark II
Date and time	12 January 2018 15:08
Paper	A3

Figure 4
VIEWPOINT I

View from School Lane adjacent to Oak Lodge

SITE EXTENT

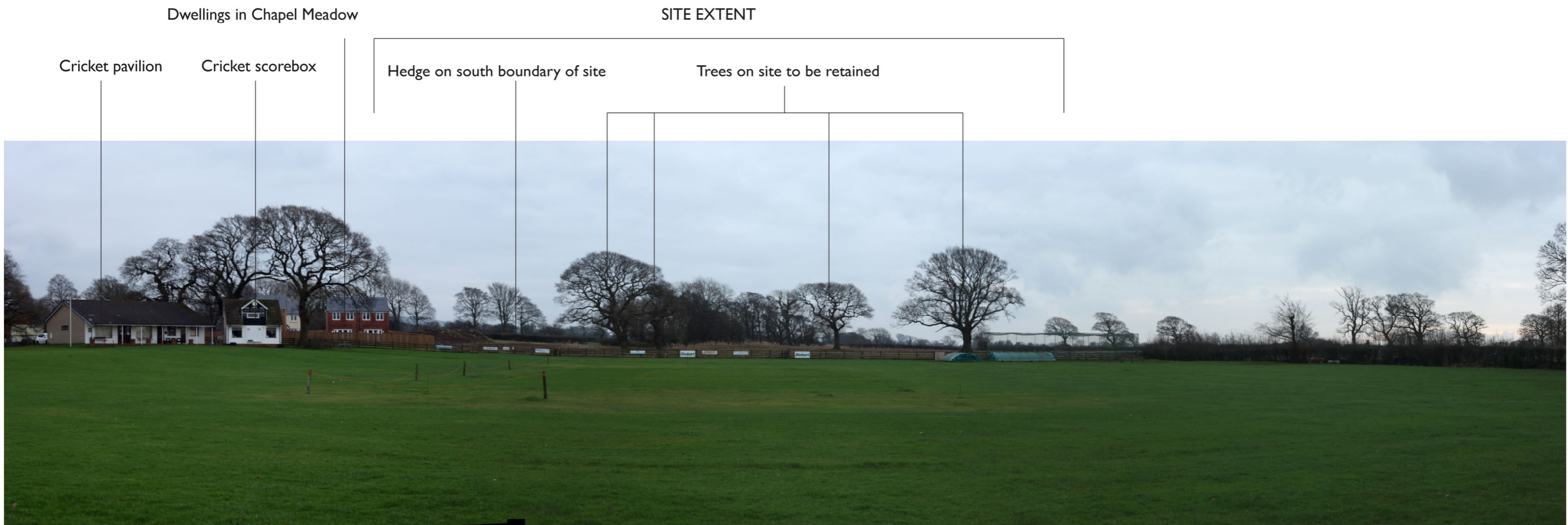


Viewpoint information

Grid reference	348470E 451404N
Distance to site boundary	134m
Camera used	Canon EOS 5D Mark II
Date and time	12 January 2018 15:08
Paper	A3

Figure 5
VIEWPOINT 2

View from School Lane approaching site from north-west



Viewpoint information

Grid reference	348440E 451363N
Distance to site boundary	109m
Camera used	Canon EOS 5D Mark II
Date and time	12 January 2018 14:38
Paper	A3

Figure 6
VIEWPOINT 3
 View from Shireshead & Forton Cricket Club
 (seat on north boundary of cricket pitch)