

# Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking

Independent Landscape and Urban Design Advisors

APPEAL REFERENCE: APP/H1033/W/21/3272745

Taxal Edge, 184 Macclesfield Road, Whaley Bridge, SK23 7DR

RESPONSE TO LANDSCAPE STATEMENT FOR APPEAL HEARING by Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking, for High Peak Borough Council

Referring to Barnes Walker Ref: Landscape Statement M3414-LS-21.07-V2

Date: 04/03/2022. Our Ref: DL&P/LS/UD/22.03-V1a

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Anton Cannell and Mary McGuire together offer a service to local government departments across Derbyshire and Staffordshire, offering independent specialist advice based over 25 years of experience within the fields of planning, landscape, and urban design.

Anton Cannell is qualified as a Landscape Architect, previously working for the London Borough of Bromley, Wakefield Groundwork Trust and Hull City Council on a wide range of projects including the design and implementation of Public Realm, Urban Parks, Country Parks, Business Parks, housing estate refurbishment, schools, nurseries and play areas. Between 2018 and 2021, Anton worked for two years at Derbyshire County Council as a Development Control Landscape Architect, funded by MHCLG (Design Quality Fund), specifically for the assessment of new housing developments on the impact on the landscape of Derbyshire. This enabled him to build his skills in LVIA and landscape assessment and gain in depth knowledge and understanding of the Landscape Character of Derbyshire. (Chartered Landscape Institute Member:13806)

Mary McGuire qualified as a Town Planner and worked with Durham City Council, and the London Borough of Greenwich. She also holds a Masters Degree in Landscape Design, and a Masters of Architecture in Sustainable Urban Design with Breeam AG. She has experience in masterplanning, urban design and community consultation and has worked for BDP, Latham Architects, and as a consultant involved in corporate responsibility projects. Mary also worked for 2 years between 2018 and 2021 at Derbyshire County Council as a Development Control Urban Designer, funded also by MHCLG (Design Quality Fund), specifically for the improvement of design of new housing developments and the impact on the landscape of Derbyshire. (RTPI Member:29778)

## **RESPONSE TO LANDSCAPE STATEMENT. (Our responses in blue relate to Paragraphs from Barnes Walker in black)**

2.3 At circa 225m AOD, the entrance to the site on the B5470 Macclesfield Road represents the lowest part of the site. From the entrance the driveway slopes uphill and passes a number of adjacent properties including 'Woodside', 'Brewood' and 'Hill Top' to the west and 'Stretton' and 'The Uplands' to the south/east. The driveway continues to rise to a level of circa 238m AOD, where a parking area is contained by the detached garage to the north and the front elevation of 'Taxal Edge' to the south. Thereafter, the driveway wraps around the eastern corner of the house up to a larger parking area at its rear at circa 241-242m AOD.

Response: The entrance to the site on the B5470 Macclesfield Road is Circa 218.5m (not Circa 225m), sloping up to the levels in the car parks as mentioned. A level of 218.5m is shown on the O.S. map on Macclesfield Road opposite the drive. This rise in 6 more metres is significantly different.

2.5 Overall, the levels across the site fall from west to east and with a drop of around 28m over a distance of circa 233m (this equates to the distance between the south-west corner of the site and

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its entrance on Macclesfield Road), there are a number of retaining walls and slopes therein, creating level plateaus for parking and built form.

Response: The main area of the site from the south-west corner to the driveway entrance is 111m and the driveway equates to the remaining length of the site, approximately 122m. According to the existing site plan with topographical data, the main part of the site is 253 at the south-western corner and 235.15 at the driveway entrance over 111m. This is a 18m drop over 111m. The driveway itself falls from 235.15 to 218.5m at Macclesfield Road, over 122m. This is an additional 16.15m drop, equating to a 34m drop from the southwestern corner to the Macclesfield Road.

2.6 The house forms a large, 3 storey properties finished in natural stone with a slate tiled roof. The extensions to the original building form timber clad, flat roofed sections and other brick-built extensions which form unattractive and inconsistent modifications, which are somewhat incongruous.

Response: Agreed, although the unattractive modifications are not visible at a distance.

2.9 The site has a wooded appearance that is in part, due to a number of large mature trees therein, but is predominantly down to the presence of numerous large mature trees located on adjacent land, particularly to the north, west and south. The trees both within and immediately adjacent to the site have been surveyed by an arboriculture consultant (Thompson Trees) and the resulting Tree Schedule/Tree Constraints Plan/Arboricultural Impact Assessment document accompanied the application.

Response: Agree that the site has a wooded appearance due to its context within wooded surrounds and occasional mature tree and tree group within the red line boundary.

2.10 Trees within the site include a group of previously 'topped' beech, holly, rowan, birch, alder, ash and sycamore to the site's east boundary (Group 3), a group of ash, beech, hornbeam and sycamore to the south, which have also been topped at 6-8m (Group 22) and several sycamores located around the garage (T14, T15, T16 and T17), which are all circa 15m high.

Response: we have not been able to access the site to verify this but believe that there has been significant tree loss in recent years on and close to the site.

2.11 Trees located adjacent to the site predominantly comprise a number of large beech trees with heights of between 22m and 25m, located to the north, east and south (T4, T13, T23, T24, T26 and T27) and sycamore with heights of 12m to 16m (T1, T2, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T12, T14, T15, T16, T17 and T20). In addition, there is also a 24m high sessile oak (T18), a 12m high holly (T11), a 12m high goat willow (T19) and a 16m ash (T21), which is suffering from Chalara ash dieback.

Response: we have not been able to access the site to verify this but believe that there has been significant tree loss in recent years on and close to the site.

2.12 The elevated nature of the site and the sloping, lower ground located to the east, promotes attractive and relatively expansive views across Horwich End and higher ground associated with Eccles Pike to the east (360m AOD) and Ladder Hill to the southeast (405m AOD).

Response: I would suggest that there are also panoramic views towards the east in general from Overhill Road in the north-east and with distant views as far as Fernilee in the south-east.

2.13 The appeal site is located close to the northern end of the distinctive local Taxal Edge ridgeline that extends from its highest point of circa 425m AOD at Goyt Forest, circa 2.6km to the south. The ridgeline is flanked to the east by the lower lying Goyt Valley and the associated River Goyt, which feeds into Fernilee Reservoir and to the west by the lower lying valley containing Todd Brook and the village of Kettleshulme.

No Response

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2.14 As the ridgeline extends north past Windgather Rocks (416m AOD), Taxal Moor (365m AOD) and Walker Brow to the appeal site, its level drops and the ridgeline dissipates into the urban fringe of Whaley Bridge and the valley to the north containing Toddbrook Reservoir (see Appendix 1, Figure 1).

Response: I would question the word dissipates into the urban fringe as I see a distinct level change and geographic change in landform at the base of the spur which does have development on it but still forms a distinct change topographically at the base of the wall that runs along the far eastern side of the driveway and extends along the base of the slope of Taxal Edge into open countryside. It is these defining elements that separate the landform quite distinctly from the urban area.

2.15 With regards to the appeal site itself, the ridgeline remains prominent and is defined by a gravel track that extends along its western boundary. This private track intersects Macclesfield Road to the north and heads uphill, following the ridgeline in a south-westerly, then southerly direction and appears to be the access to a former quarry to the south of the appeal site. When passing the west boundary of the site on this route, the presence of the ridgeline is particularly prominent due to the lower lying appeal site and housing areas to the east, with a steep, densely wooded slope down to Macclesfield Road to the west.

Response: Agreed

2.16 This distinct ridgeline is considered to be important in defining the perceived and physical extent of the urban edge of Whaley Bridge in this location, notwithstanding the identified settlement edge described by the Local Plan. Land adjacent to the east of the ridgeline in the vicinity of the appeal site, includes the built form of Taxal Edge and the houses to the north (that include 'Brewood', 'Woodside' and 'Hill Top'). Thereafter the residential development to the east side of the ridgeline continues down the slope with the houses located on Macclesfield Road, The Rise, Linglongs Avenue, Beech Rise and Linglongs Road.

Response: We cannot agree that the ridgeline is the defining feature or the perceived edge of the urban area of Whaley Bridge. I consider the ridgeline to be a defining feature in the landscape quite separate to the urban area. The ridgeline itself flows and is repeated by ridgelines beyond in the surrounding landscape. It would be difficult for this to be the perceived edge for many people. The extent of built development is below the ridgeline, and I would consider the base of the spur to be the perceived settlement edge based on the strong horizontal line of the wall at the base of the ridgeline and the track. The three houses are not solid enough as a group to represent the defining edge of the settlement at this point.

2.17 In addition, land off Linglongs Lane is currently being developed by Barratt Homes, and this new development of 107 detached and semi-detached properties will extend residential development continuously down the slope from the appeal site (at circa 250m (214) AOD) to the Clover Chemicals site adjacent to the River Goyt (at circa 180m AOD).

Response: The site off Linglongs Lane sits in lower fields in the landscape and has a much lesser impact on the perception of the settlement as it is surrounded by built development on three sides. The site is much lower within the valley and settled within the village. The development may have a perceived change on the settlement edge from the south, but I do not agree that it affects the impression of the development edge from the West. The site is located halfway along Macclesfield Road towards the core of the village and mirrors the extent of development on the north of Macclesfield Road. It is the significantly lower level of this site that makes it read within the existing settlement but does not influence the perception of the settlement edge to the west.

2.18 By contrast, land to the west of the ridgeline is rural. The densely wooded western slopes of the ridgeline culminate at Macclesfield Road and more open areas comprising small, enclosed pastoral fields extend down to the southern banks of Toddbrook Reservoir.

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Response: Agreed.

2.19 The housing located along Macclesfield Road predominantly comprises period, stone-built mews/terraced properties, which step up property by property, consistently with the western incline of the road.

Response: Agreed

2.20 Examination of historic mapping from the late 19th Century (see Appendix 1, Figures 2 & 3), describes a belt of woodland extending along the eastern side of the ridgeline that runs past the appeal site. With the exception of some smaller tracts of coniferous plantation to the south and areas of broadleaf woodland to the north, much of the woodland on the east side of Taxal Edge ridgeline has been lost and now comprises open moorland. The mapping indicates that this wooded area was extensively quarried during the 19th Century and this activity is to an extent, likely to account for the existing levels on the appeal site.

Response: Agreed

2.21 The late 19th Century mapping also describes the presence of Macclesfield Road on its present-day alignment, showing the distinct bend in the road just to the west of the site entrance. This bend reflects the presence of the ridgeline and forms a localised point where the road stops climbing and passes around the end of the ridgeline before tracking down its west side towards Kettlethulme.

Response: Agreed

2.22 It is also clear from the historic mapping that by the latter years of the 19th Century, a number of small, isolated clusters of built form were located along Macclesfield Road between the point it crosses over the River Goyt to the east and the entrance to the appeal site. Properties located in the vicinity of the site entrance and the nearby bend in Macclesfield Road to the west appear to have been constructed in the initial years of the 20th Century.

Response: Agreed. Settlement patterns at this time were more dispersed and the edge of settlement may well have been perceived at the bend of the Macclesfield Road and the road to the quarry which would have had more local economic significance at the time.

2.23 By the latter years of the 1930's, the ribbon of development along Macclesfield Road had become almost continuous and by the middle of the 1950's, the construction of Reddish Lane initiated back land development to the north side of the road. //2.24 This back land development continued through the 1960's with the addition of Reddish Avenue and associated houses with new residential development extending southwards along the west side of Linglongs Road and the connecting Linglongs Avenue. //2.25 Thereafter the development off Linglongs Avenue continued on to Beech Rise and The Rise, therefore infilling the rising land between the appeal site and Linglongs Road with residential development.

Response: It is as described that the built form has gradually extended up the hillside westward and also extended north of Macclesfield Road. The natural extent being at the base of the spur of Taxal Edge. The decisions at the time would have been in the context of the policies and pressured for development at that time. The current application is assessed in view of NPPF Policy, and local policy, taking account of current guidance from local SPD's and national design guidance placemaking guidance with very much more emphasis on the need to be contextual and responsive to local character.

2.26 This area of development extends up to a Public Footpath (Whaley Bridge FP56), which links with Macclesfield Road (via a section of Whaley Bridge FP65 and part of the access driveway to the appeal site). Public Footpath FP56 (a route known as Taxal Beeches) tracks in a north/south direction between the appeal site and the development to the east on Beech Rise, Linglongs Avenue and The Rise. To the south, it ceases to be contained by the higher appeal site to the west and the lower

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adjacent residential development to the east and tracks through a wooded area, which is located to the south of the appeal site, with lower pastoral fields to the east. Thereafter Public Footpath FP56 connects with Taxal Moor Road/Lanehead Road, circa 330m to the south of the appeal site.

Response: This footpath which is approximately 10m wide we consider to be a defining edge to the settlement with a distinct separation and change in character on either side of it, apart from the first part of the entry from Macclesfield Road where there is a joint usage. The appeal site is therefore set back from the rear of the houses at the end of the village within open countryside.

2.27 To the west, north-west and south-west of the appeal site and the associated ridgeline, the landscape is wholly rural and the boundary of the Peak District National Park is located between circa 340m and 390m to the west, south-west and south

Response: Agreed

2.28 To the east, views extend across the lower lying areas of New Horwich and Horwich End on the south side of Whaley Bridge, as these parts of the settlement are located at a lower elevation within the valleys occupied by the River Goyt and Randall Carr Brook.

Response : Agreed.

2.29 To the north, the main body of the Whaley Bridge settlement area is located to the east and north of Toddbrook Reservoir and is centred upon the lower lying corridor associated with the River Goyt. That said the settlement area extends to the west of the town centre to greater extent, possibly by virtue of the reduced gradients of the land between the river (at circa 160m AOD) and Stoneheads (at circa 260m AOD) and Hockerley (at Circa 210m AOD), to the west and north-west respectively.

Response: Agreed.

2.30 The result of the described incremental development of Whaley Bridge through the 19th and 20th Centuries and beyond is that the historic core of the town (acknowledged and to an extent protected by its conservation area status), has remained relatively intact and generally incorporates older, period stone-built properties, with an overall settlement pattern that presents a linear arrangement that is contiguous with the River Goyt. Properties are often positioned along the contour lines on rising ground and are often stepped to accommodate localised changes in level. Where roads, such as Macclesfield Road, track uphill, perpendicular to slopes with a reduced incline, the stepped levels of adjacent properties are more pronounced.

Response: Agreed. The incremental development of the town has filled in a dispersed linear settlement pattern from the historic core along main routes. There are distinct character areas due to changes in style and character of the periods of development. For example, a more characteristic area of individual villas within woodland settings is located to the north of Toddbrook Reservoir. Though the gradient of the slope up Macclesfield Road is such is that the stepping up covers a large part of the next house up the slope and so screened by the house in front of it. The issue of the houses above on Taxal Edge is that their whole elevations will be visible from the bottom and across the valley.

2.31 As a result, the historic road network within the settlement area, comprising the A5004 Buxton Road, Old Road, Whaley Lane, Macclesfield Road and Chapel Road amongst others, is in most cases lined with older, period built form, which with the general exception of the town centre, comprises residential development.

Response: I agree with this but there would have been outlying scattered farmsteads and occasional houses outside this historic road network as there would have been some dispersed settlement.

2.32 Beyond the main highway network however, areas of backland residential development have occurred throughout the 20th Century and this development has given rise to various different types

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of architectural styles that form areas of 'Anywhere 'Estate Layouts' as referred to within the High Peak Borough Council Residential Design SPD (see Appendix 4). 2.33 This kind of residential development occurs in a number of locations around Whaley Bridge, and examples in close proximity to the site include the estate next to the appeal site on Linglongs Avenue, Beech Rise and The Rise, housing off Reddish Avenue to the north side of Macclesfield Road and housing on Waterfoot Lane and Mereside Gardens also to the north side of Macclesfield Road (see Appendix 1, Figures 7A and 7B). 2.34 These examples include brick-built houses with concrete tiled roofs and white render with black painted timber (mock tudor) elevations. These developments are evidently inconsistent with the recognised vernacular in terms of their design, appearance and arrangement and serve to diversify the settlement pattern and dilute the overriding character of the older, period buildings and other more sensitively designed, modern additions.

**Response: Agreed.** Though I am sure the prime impression is still of Whaley Bridge being of a traditional settlement character.

## 3. Landscape Character

3.1 The diverse characteristics of our broader landscape have in most cases, been ascertained through the process of landscape character assessment (LCA). LCA is a technique used to develop a consistent and comprehensive understanding of what gives England's landscape its character. Assessments for the landscape in the vicinity of the application site have been carried out at national and county scales as follows:

**Response: Agreed.**

3.2 England has been divided into 8 regional volumes which comprise a total of 159 areas with similar landscape character, which are called National Character Areas (NCAs); previously known as Joint Character Areas (JCAs). The 'Character of England Landscape, Wildlife and Cultural Features Map' produced in 2005 by The Countryside Agency with support from English Heritage, was an update to a 1996 original. This map subdivides England into 159 NCAs providing a picture of the differences in landscape character at the national scale. 3.3 The site falls within Countryside Character Volume 2: North West and is positioned within NCA 53 – South West Peak.

3.3 The site falls within Countryside Character Volume 2: North West and is positioned within NCA 53 – South West Peak.

**Response: Agreed.**

3.4 The size and scale of the areas encompassed by the National Character Areas are vast and often bear a limited relevance to sites of the scale associated with this appraisal. As a result, smaller scale, more detailed assessments carried out by County Councils or Local Planning Authorities, will often identify landscape characteristics, which offer a better representation of those found within the vicinity of a particular site or surrounding area. Nevertheless, the following key characteristics identified by the document are considered to be of relevance to the landscape/townscape in the vicinity of the appeal site: • An upland landscape characterised by Carboniferous age Millstone Grit with isolated basins of Coal Measures, deeply dissected by streams and rivers, resulting in a ridge-and-valley landscape of distinctive pattern and character; • Isolated gritstone ridges and tors provide a dramatic contrast to the upland landscape, such as at Ramshaw Rocks, The Roaches and Windgather Rocks; • Rivers Bollin, Churnet, Dane, Dean, Dove, Hamps, Goyt and Manifold, all with their sources in the upland core and some feeding reservoirs as they flow downstream; • Robust architectural style built predominantly of local stone with stone slate or Staffordshire blue clay tiled roofs, reflecting local geology and history. • Predominantly dispersed settlement across the NCA. • Remains of former stone quarries and coal mining activities...; and • Long, uninterrupted views from margins to

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upland areas and vice versa, with contained and intimate views around the foothills and within the valleys.

Agreed: though the document also refers to factors influencing the landscape, including the pressure for development:

For example, on Page 10 of NCA53:

“Development pressures within the NCA lie mainly within or on the fringes of settlements; these include Bollington, Whaley Bridge, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Macclesfield, New Mills and Buxton.”

On ‘Page 33: Settlement and development:

“Green Belt status applies to 11 per cent and National Park status to a further 65 per cent of the NCA and to a degree this protection limits the demands for new build development pressure in those areas. However, it does increase the development pressures on the edges and beyond those designated areas. For example, high increases in housing stock, measured in units per hectare between 1998 and 2003, are recorded at Bollington, Whaley Bridge, Chapel-en-le-Frith and Dove Holes which lie outside the National Park or Green Belt.

On Page 58:

“The main source of disturbance is associated with the urban developments at Disley, Whaley Bridge and Chapel-en-le-Frith and the urban fringes of Macclesfield, Buxton (in the north) and Leek (in the south).

3.17 Given the appeal site is located adjacent to the urban edge, its character is influenced by its proximity to the settlement. As a result, the key characteristics of the Settled Valley Pastures Landscape Character Type, as defined by the DCC’s Landscape Character of Derbyshire and HPBC’s Landscape Character SPD5, are not wholly consistent with the character of the appeal site.

Response: The area is outside the urban edge in open countryside and close to greenbelt. It is worth noting that The County Council in *Technical Support Document 1 Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity 2013*, defined Areas of Multiple Sensitivities throughout the county using data sets from Landscape Character Assessments, Historic Landscape Character, and ecological data. Areas to the West of Whaley Bridge came out as areas of Primary Sensitivity:

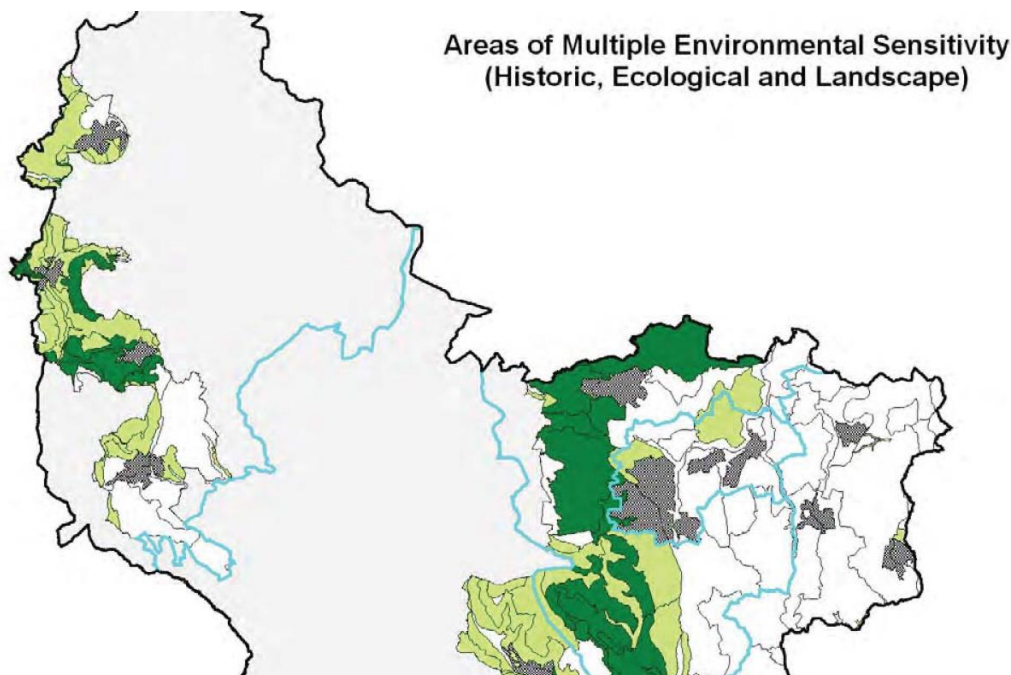
*‘Page 6:*

*Although the remainder of the county has few areas of primary significance, there is a small area around Repton and Bretby Park in the Melbourne Parklands NCA and around Calke Abbey and Ticknall. Other sensitive areas can be seen in the Dark Peak (includes the South West Peak) NCA to the south and west of Chapel-en-le-Frith around the minor settlement of Tunstead Milton, and to the east and west of Whaley Bridge.’*

This accords with the national objective to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The map following demonstrates that areas of primary and secondary sensitivity are located to the west of Whaley Bridge.

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*Landscape Character of Derbyshire: Technical Support Document 1: Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity 2013. Accessed webpage: 02.03.2022*

## 4. Visual Receptors & Viewpoints

Public Views 4.1 Given position of the appeal site on the east side of the lower, northern part of Taxal Edge ridgeline, the nature of the surrounding topography and the presence of screening trees, the appeal site is visible primarily from locations to the east.

Response: in addition, there are glimpses on the approach to Whaley Bridge from the south-east.

4.2 People walking the footpaths in the open countryside are likely to have a focus upon the landscape/townscape and are considered to have a higher sensitivity, given the higher value of the views experienced and their relative susceptibility to change.

Response: In addition to PROWS, the 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, 3rd Edition' states on Page 113 that: those most susceptible to change are:

- residents at home.
- People engaging in outdoor activities including PROWS,
- Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents of the areas'

In particular, Whaley Bridge is one of those settlements where the landscape setting is part of the experience of the place.

4.3 Partial views of the appeal site are experienced from Public Footpath Whaley Bridge FP56 (Taxal Beeches), which shares the initial section of the driveway into the site and before tracking at a slightly lower level along its southern boundary. The route is shrouded in vegetation, however partial, glimpsed views of the existing built form on the appeal site on higher ground to the north and the existing housing on lower ground to the south are experienced from this route. Viewpoint photographs **VP1, VP2 and VP3** (see Appendix 1 Figures 9, 10 & 11) provide examples of the nature of the views experienced. The clarity of the views is likely to vary on a seasonal basis due to changes in the level of leaf cover present on the containing vegetation.



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Response: On the lower section of the footpath track FP56 (Taxal Beeches) there are clear views of the main building and garage building from approx. 1.5m and above to roof pitch, and car parking above the wall on approaching the site can be seen through clear gaps in the trees.



Site Visit: 23 February 2022.

These views are enhanced on approach as the land is sloping upwards to the buildings and therefore the walker is looking up the hill to the buildings.

Whereas further along the footpath the wall is higher are only upper parts of the buildings are visible. These are more partial views with intermittent vegetation screening in parts completely.



However, the tree heights allow for good views through.

4.4 Partial views of the appeal site are also experienced from Public Footpath Whaley Bridge FP57, which forms part of the long-distance trail known as the 'Midshires Way'. This footpath tracks across the open fields located on lower ground, circa 400m to the east. A view of the appeal site is only experienced from a relatively short section of the footpath located close to the rear of the existing properties on Macclesfield Road. Viewpoint photograph VP4 (see Appendix 1 Figure 12), describes

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the nature of the view experienced from this route, although it should be noted that this view is inevitably going to change as the field which the route tracks through is currently being developed by Barratt Homes under a planning consent for 107 dwellings. As a result, once these houses are constructed, the views up to the houses on Linglongs Road and the house on the appeal site is unlikely to prevail. Notwithstanding these future changes, at the time of visiting the site/surrounding area (July 2021), the existing house on the appeal site could be seen, set above the lower residential development to the west of Linglongs Road, with a densely wooded backdrop.

Response: Agreed.

4.5 Other views of the appeal site are available from a number of publicly accessible locations within the Horwich End/New Horwich areas located within the southern extents of Whaley Bridge. To the east of the River Goyt and the A5004 Buxton Road, the rising topography often allows views across the intervening lower valley, towards the higher ground to the west associated with the Taxal Edge ridgeline. As a result, the appeal site and the built form therein can be seen from a number of roads and Public Footpaths located to the east of the site. The site is set above, yet is visibly connected with the lower lying adjacent residential development within the view and is set below and against a wooded backdrop. The nature of these views is considered by a number of Viewpoint photographs (see Appendix 1 Figures 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 & 18) as follows: • **VP5** – From Shallcross Road, adjacent to Shallcross Hall Farm; • **VP6, VP7, & VP8** – From Public Footpath Whaley Bridge FP 46; • **VP9** – From Chapel Road; and • **VP10** – From Old Road;

Response: The views from the east vary depending on height. On approach into Whaley Bridge on the Buxton Road, there are views close to the junction with Macclesfield Road. The houses located here have views up to the ridgeline. The existing house stands out prominently with new materials. The whole of the elevation is visible above the existing houses and therefore appears more prominent than the development below. The trees form a backdrop to the housing estate below, and whilst the new and existing building can be seen within the context of the woodland backdrop, this varies in different views. From Shallcross Road the high level viewpoints clearly see the existing building more than the newly converted house above the rooflines of the housing estate below., From VP6,7, and 8, again quite high level views and more distant. Views of the existing house stand out as incongruous to the wooded backdrop. VP9 from Chapel Road is less prominent. From Old Road and Rock Bank there are views across at a similar height where there are slight gaps in the trees to the skyline behind and the new house is more prominent. The thinning of the trees and the gaps through to open sky beyond diminishes the idea of the woodland being a backdrop.

The Barnes Walker Landscape Statement includes photos from VP5,VP6,VP7,VP9 and VP10, these are useful but it does not discuss the proposed development in relation to these viewpoints. I would consider that the relevance of these views needs further investigation and would describe the views as below:

VP5- existing development is low down and set amongst a well wooded landscape, the development is not dominant in the view and recedes nestled amongst the woodland. The proposed site is seen as a wooded ridge within this well wooded landscape, the existing development on the site is not conspicuous at this distance, however a line of development as per the proposals would be visible and stand out well above the main area of existing development below.

VP6- existing development forms a prominent part of the foreground of the view with the wooded ridge of Taxal Edge as a backdrop which links to other woodlands in the right side of the view. The existing development adjacent to the site is clearly visible but as standalone buildings set amongst woodland with the wooded ridge prevailing, the addition of a line of development as per the proposals would be create a visual link with the development below and interrupt the continuity of the wooded ridge.

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VP7-as above

VP8- as above

VP9-the wooded ridge of Taxal Edge dominates the skyline and creates a pleasant backdrop to the Town softening the built environment. The site is prominent in the view as part of the wooded ridge. Except for existing development in the foreground much of the existing development is set amongst trees and it is the trees that dominate the view punctuated by the occasional visible building. The site appears in the same manner and the proposed development of the site with a line of development would contract with this pattern of development and be a conspicuous addition to development at a higher level.

VP10-as per VP6

4.6 These views are experienced from distances of between circa 900m and 1.3km. There are many other locations where similar, or more distant views can be experienced. These include Eccles Pike to the east and a number of footpaths and roads located within the intervening rising ground and the west side of Ladder Hill to the south-east. I have not provided viewpoint photography from these locations as they are from greater distances, and I believe those I have provided are representative of the nature of the views experienced.

Response: Agreed

4.7 In addition, I have included a single viewpoint photograph **VP11** from Start Lane, the location of which is circa 600m to the north-west of the application site. This viewpoint is located on rising ground (at circa 260m AOD) and is considered to be representative of the kind of view experienced by people walking the Public Footpaths to the north and north-west of the appeal site, both outside and within the Peak District National Park. **VP11** demonstrates that the appeal site cannot be seen from these locations due to the topography associated with the intervening ridgeline and the associated dense tree cover provided by the woodland thereon.

Response: Agreed concerning VP11, however this viewpoint is not within the Peak District National Park and the comment tends to suggest that the site is not visible from the Peak District National Park when no views are included to investigate if this is the case.

In general, I agree that there are many views from the east. There are glimpses from Fernilee on approach to Whaley Bridge, and particularly from the B5004 Buxton Road on entry into the settlement. Due to a footpath closure, it was not possible to check whether there are views from the public footpath over the spillway of Toddbrook Reservoir, as it appears there may be a direct line of site to part of the site.

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*Google Earth Pro. Accessed 02/03/22*

## 6. Response to HPBC's Concerns

6.1 The single Reason for Refusal contains the following key landscape related issues:

- The scheme would not be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses;
- The scheme would not be of an appropriate scale for this aspect of the Whaley Bridge settlement;
- The scheme would constitute poor design and fails to understand the site's defining characteristics

6.10 I consider the appeal site to represent a transitional landscape area on the urban edge, where the levels continue to rise towards the ridgeline to the west, where there is a higher proportion of tree cover than the main settlement area, and where a visible and physical presence of built form prevails therein.

Response: I think it is transitional in that it is read as a backdrop to the settlement but it also reads as part of the wider landscape and views across the valley is characteristic of the Dark Peak: Settled Valley Landscape typology.

6.12 I have considered the visual prominence of the appeal site via a number of viewpoint photographs taken from locations that are predominantly to the east of the site. The existing house is located closer to the properties on Beech Rise/Linglongs Avenue than the new properties would be as they will be positioned further back into the site.

Response: The properties will still be seen above the level of the ridgelines of the houses below.

6.13 The existing house is partially visible from Public Footpath FP 56 (see Appendix 1, Figures 9, 10 & 11, Viewpoints 1, 2 & 3), however views/intervisibility are limited by the intervening trees and vegetation located along the footpath corridor and along the east boundary of the appeal site.... The appeal site was originally, distinctly separate from the town, however incremental growth up the eastern slope of the ridgeline, along and to the sides of Macclesfield Road has connected the appeal site with the settlement over time.

Response: The existing house is more visible at this time of year and there are gaps where there are clear views over the wall from the Footpath FP56. Views are more limited after the main house and

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visibility back towards the site is more partial. The site was originally more disconnected, but it was of a different form and typology to the incremental development below it. The closeness of the two types of development has not connected the settlement due to the character still being perceived as predominantly woodland character and the significant gap between the PROW and the site.

6.14 The result of this incremental, westward, uphill, ribbon and backland development, along and adjacent to Macclesfield Road, which has visibly connected the appeal site and houses to its north ('Brewood', 'Hilltop' and 'Woodside'), is I believe, that the ridgeline to the immediate west of the appeal site, currently represents the perceived extent of the settlement on this south-western edge of Whaley Bridge.

Response:

We disagree with this statement. The incremental development does not justify further extension and up the ridge which we consider is part of the natural landscape of the open countryside. The presence of the three houses closer to the junction has a limited impression on the perceived character of the woodland edge.

6.15 Given that the formal settlement edge of Whaley Bridge is described by the line between the Public Footpath (FP56) and the back of plots on Beech Rise, Linglongs Avenue and M3414-LS-21.07-V2 18 The Rise, the settlement edge defined by the Local Plan is not representative of the perceived settlement edge in this location.

Response: The settlement edge as defined in the local plan in my opinion is the defined edge. The outlying houses within the woodland have a different relationship to the settlement and are more related to the bend in the road and the extent of development along Macclesfield Road than the woodland edge.

6.16 I do not therefore believe that the proposed development will be perceived as being disconnected from the settlement and firmly believe that considered alongside an appropriate landscape scheme, the woodland character of the site and its transitional qualities on the east side of the Taxal Edge Ridgeline, will prevail.

Response: The development would be disconnected from the settlement and the woodland character would be lost if the development were to be allowed. The views at varying levels across to the site demonstrate there is a prominence in the location above the existing settlement. These views vary where the buildings are seen with a faint line of the ridgeline beyond, and some with a full backdrop of woodland. However, these views will change with buildings in between the trees. The more solid forms and outlines will be perceived from different angles, but the changes will present a perceived change in character from a distance. Even with an appropriate landscape scheme, the building mass, the layout of long driveways and amount of hard surface will create a more domesticated character to the houses. The front gardens are likely to be personalised to an extent that the woodland character is changes. This perceived change may create a connection with the exiting built form below but the impact on the natural setting would be significant.

6.17 The UDO also suggests that Public Footpath FP56 Taxal Edge, '...traditionally defines the edge of settlement'. This footpath appears on the historic mapping for the first time during the latter years of the 19th Century (see Appendix 1, Figure 2 & 3). At that time, the footpath and the appeal site were located within the countryside and were distinctly separated from the settlement edge by some distance. The advent of the abovementioned incremental development up and adjacent to Macclesfield Road, has brought the settlement up to the footpath and the appeal site. The construction of the houses on Linglongs Avenue, Beech Rise and The Rise in the 1970/s-80's has created a new settlement edge from that moment in time. I therefore believe the UDO's suggestion that the footpath has traditionally defined the settlement edge, is unfounded.

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Response: Agree to some extent. However, settlements were more dispersed traditionally and have been filled in since. Given the straight and direct views up the hill along Macclesfield Road, it may well have been perceived that the occasional group and outlying houses before the bend in the road were still part of the settlement. The footpath to quarry would have been a traditional route for workers from the village and therefore the perceived sense of place may have extended in this direction before the incremental development occurred. However, this suggestion of a traditionally perceived sense of place is separate to the reason why the settlement edge has been defined by the borough council at this point. I believe it is due to a change in landscape character and the defining geographical features on the ground of the wider public right of way and base of the slope that has led to the settlement edge being located at this point.

6.18 Lastly, the UDO states that the existing built form on the appeal site are set within a woodland area, in their own parkland setting of a distinctly different character. As discussed earlier, I agree that the appeal site has a different, transitional character to the adjacent settlement area, however I do not agree that it has a parkland character. The settlement area, the appeal site and the adjacent open countryside are all located within the Settled Valley Pastures Landscape Type. High Peak Borough Council's Landscape Character SPD5 March 2006, sets out a number of key characteristics of this landscape type that are not wholly relevant when considering the character of the appeal site and the settlement area. This is because the key characteristics listed are predominantly associated with rural areas, rather than settlement areas. Given the location of the appeal site, its character is influenced by its proximity and connectivity with the settlement edge, its location on the east side of Taxal Edge ridgeline and the tree cover within the site and around it. As a result, I believe the appeal site has a transitional character, which along with an appropriate scheme of landscape works, can accommodate the proposed development without harm to the character of the settlement or the wider countryside ie the Settled Valley Pastures.

Response: I agree that the site is a woodland area. The referral to parkland setting related to the previous use of the site as a large residential home and the Edwardian character of the buildings in its own grounds. Previous tree plans showed the presence of a few exotic trees which have since been removed which led me to conclude that within the woodland setting, the garden of the house had a landscape that reflected its age and character with cypress and laburnum within the mix. The predominant mix was and still is a native mix of species with the appearance of woodland character from viewpoints around the town. I do not think when viewed from across the valley this is seen as a transitional character, and in fact it clearly connects visually with other groups of similar woodland character across the landscape as shown in the photo below.

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*Photograph 02/04/22*

## Design

6.21 Modern developments in the area often incorporate white window and door frames, white rainwater goods and brick or in some cases, mock tudor, half-timbered effect elevations (see Appendix 1, Figures 7A & 7B), that are evidently contrary to the vernacular and the Residential Design Guide SPD. In terms of materials and finishes, the proposed houses incorporate gritstone elevations and grey slate roofs. In addition, the fenestrations will be finished in grey, whereas gutters and drainpipes will be black, rather than white, which is commonplace and more visually prominent. The proposed houses represent a modern interpretation of a family house and the proposed materials and finishes are consistent with the Dark Peak and with associated material/colour recommendations within the Residential Design Guide SPD (Chapter 3 – Understanding the Setting).

Response: It is agreed that materials follow the recommendations of the design guide but disagree with the typology, repetition and form of the development. The scale and character is too contrasting with the adjoining suburban developments. The elevated nature of the site and the repetition of the housing styles give an overall impression of a ‘town house’ development of villa typology and does not reflect the rural character of the site.

A previous proposal for development on part of the site was made under application HPK/2013/0503. This proposal included the conversion of the existing property known as ‘Taxal Edge’ to apartments and two new semidetached dwellings attached to the main building of ‘Taxal Edge’. The existing woodland area to the southwest would not have been affected by these proposals and planning permission was approved. The proposals that are subject to this Appeal differ significantly from application HPK/2013/0503 in that development is proposed that extends from the existing dwelling (on the site of the old classroom) to the location of ‘Taxal Edge’ (which is proposed to be demolished). This would lead to the loss of the wooded gap that separates these two elements of existing development and an overall increase in the visual impacts of development along the wooded ridge the site occupies.

6.23 The abovementioned tiered effect accommodates the level changes that occur between the lower north-eastern end of the appeal site and its higher south-western extents. In addition, the

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appeal site also has a distinct fall from the ridgeline to its immediate west. This slope falls west to east and extends over the appeal site, the adjacent Public Footpath FP56, across the adjacent housing area on Linglongs Avenue, Beech Rise and The Rise and beyond, towards the River Goyt. Paragraph 5.7.4 of the Residential Design Guide SPD states 'where houses are positioned at right angles to the slope, buildings will need to be set back on a platform or respond to the slope in section' and 'stepping them back from the road will create a feeling of prominence and improve views out from the dwelling.' The appeal proposals set the houses back from the access driveway in this manner and will therefore have the majority of their garden area at the front, with longer driveways. This approach has drawn criticism from the UDO and the LO, despite the set-back approach being consistent with the Residential Design Guide SPD.

Response: I agree that a tiered effect is traditional and characteristic in the area. Often this stepping is not disguised between properties, especially in terraces. The long front gardens and frontage garages mean that retaining walls will be more prominently seen from the frontage and in between the gaps in the buildings. Plots 1 to 3 have one-meter changes between finish floor levels and then Plots 4 to 7 general have 2m changes. This amount of remodelling will have an impact on the landscape character of the site, the long straight lines in the driveways lead me to understand that a significant amount of remodelling would occur and would not have the traditional tiered effect envisioned in the policy. The pushing back of the buildings further towards the ridge also has the effect of moving them further away from the settlement boundary.

6.24 Examination of historic maps (see Appendix 1, Figures 2 & 3) has revealed that the site and the ridge in general has been previously quarried and the subsequent introduction of the house and garage therein has likely required further remodelling to facilitate their construction. Some remodelling will be required to construct the proposed houses, however given the history of the site, the localised levels are unlikely to be the original natural levels and some remodelling is inevitable when developing a sloping site. Given the topography of the borough, some remodelling has inevitably occurred on construction sites throughout the borough, regardless of when the development occurred.

Response:

I accept this is the case on other sites and it is a matter of good design and layout as to the level of impact. With cumulative effect of 7 new singular long driveways within a relatively small plot, I still consider this to have a negative impact on the landscape character. The older quarrying of the site has been less engineered along straight lines and has become part of the relic industrial landscape character that derived from its natural typography and geology. The imposition of driveways and retaining walls need to be carefully achieved to reduce the impact on this setting.

6.26 With a considerable footprint and three floors with dormer style windows in the roof, the existing house on the site could be considered a grand villa and given the criteria in the SPD, I consider the proposed house designs to form a hybrid of a Small-Scale Villa and a Grand Villa. The proposed houses will be set in a sinuous/meandering line towards the higher, western edge of the appeal site and will tier down from left to right in the views of the site that are experienced from the east. The proposed houses will not therefore form a straight-line arrangement in plan or elevation.

Response: I consider this hybrid design to be too dominant and with more frontage elevations facing the valley, the impact will be greater than to have the single large Grand Villa typology.

6.27 With 2.5 storeys, the proposed semi-detached houses will have dormer windows located within the roof area on their front, east facing elevations and the detached properties will have a third level window located within a front facing gable. The proposed grey framed fenestration, gritstone elevation and slate roofs form appropriate materiality for the site and location and in time the prominence of the stone elevations will reduce through natural weathering of the stone.



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Response: The dormer windows in the semi-detached houses are substantial and give the houses the appearance of three storeys rather than 2.5 storeys. The detached houses with a third level window in the front facing gable will be clearly a three-story building in appearance. My main concern is that the gradation of elevations is still significantly built up and prominent within the site. They are modern houses but are not contextual in this location where lower 2 storey dwellings with a mixture of ridged and hipped roofs predominate.

6.28 The key views of the site are experienced from elevated locations to the east, and these are considered by my Viewpoints 1 to 11 (see Appendix 1, Figures 8 to 19). These views are relatively distant and expansive, and I acknowledge that there are many similar views from more elevated and more distant publicly accessible locations to the east and southeast. In general, these views will be affected by the development proposals, however I do not consider the changes to be harmful as they will be of a limited scale, given the distances involved, the expansive nature of the views experienced, the woodland setting of the site and the edge of settlement character.

Response: It is accepted that the key views are generally correct and correspond to the PROW's around the area. The views of the site are either very local, along the adjoining footpath, or more long distant from across the valley, there are few middle-distance views. However, I consider that the views from the approach road into Whaley Bridge from the B5004 and the houses on that road are affected to a higher level and would say that the magnitude of change would be medium to high in the degree of harm experienced. I am also aware that Whaley Bridge is very much a settlement experienced within its landscape setting by all residents and therefore the sensitivity to change will be greater. It is, therefore, the case that the many similar views that are experienced when moving around the valley, are relevant to the experience of the place.

6.29 The proposed houses will form a layer of built form that is visibly connected with the slightly lower residential development on Linglongs Avenue, The Rise and Beech Rise. In addition, as the new development off Linglong Road is constructed, this will extend the residential development further down the slope within these views. The new houses will be set against a backdrop of existing dense woodland trees (which is to be enhanced by new off-site tree planting within the site edged blue) and in time will become partially screened by the establishment of new tree planting within the site.

Response: The residential developments below on Linglongs Avenue, The Rise and Beech Rise are all at a level below the woodland edge and therefore it is not seen as slightly below but more pronounced. The existing house and new house within the woodland appear elevated and dominant from views within these streets, particularly from the junction into Linglongs Avenue from Linglongs Road. The new development will be set back and more elevated. However, even with new planting there will be glimpses through to a much greater impression of elevated development. The height of the new buildings will leave a narrow band of trees behind to form a backdrop and new planting at the front may screen partially. When the landscape has matured and the development has weathered the change may not be so evident, however, I am of the opinion that in order to maintain views from the new development there will be clear gaps and residents will wish to enjoy the amenity of the front gardens which may lead to the weakening of the landscape structure and character.

6.30 The retention and improvement of the existing woodland trees and the establishment of the proposed landscape works, particularly the tree planting, will be important in enhancing the level of tree cover across the site, whilst improving the assimilation of the development into this edge of settlement, transitional location.

Response: I accept that this may well be the case, but for the reasons given above, I consider that the new planting will not mitigate the dominant effect of the new houses and the character of the woodland will be changed. The nature of proposed planting may reinforce the woodland character

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but there will still be conflict with the residential gardens that will impose their own character within the site.

## **The Driveway/Public Footpath FP56**

Paragraphs 6.31 to 6.38

Response to comments regarding the driveway. We accept that the treatment of the driveway approach from Macclesfield Road, can be made to be sympathetic to the setting and character of the area. The extent of new driveways may result in an over engineered approach which would encroach on the character of the site. The footpath and experience of walkers leaving the settlement behind and entering into open countryside is a concern along this footpath. The existing school buildings are of poor quality; however, the new development will be of a scale and massing that the glimpsed views from the footpath will have an urbanising affect.

## **The Entrance on Macclesfield Road**

6.39 The UDO makes the following points regarding the entrance on Macclesfield Road: • Any increase in number of houses and vehicle activity on the access road close to Macclesfield Road needs to be considered. This may have implications on the design of the junction and subsequent loss of character of this edge of village. If it were the case that a more engineered highway solution would result, then I would consider this a significant loss of character. The appearance of the entrance may change whichever future development scenario prevails; however the nature of the changes and any associated levels of harm/beneficial effect would be subject to detailed design proposals for the junction. As mentioned above, the footpath/access driveway intersection with Macclesfield Road could be a location where a reclaimed cobbled threshold could form a new appropriate, attractive, and functional access to the (shared) driveway. As a result, I do not agree that the proposed redevelopment of the appeal site, specifically the junction with the end of the driveway, would result in harm to the character of Macclesfield Road/the settlement edge in this location

Response: The Highways Authorities response considers that there should not be significant change to the junction on Macclesfield Road and this will be subject to detailed design. The UDO comments were made in anticipation that any change would need to be correctly detailed. The Highways officer does say that in order to comply with current design guidance, the overall shared driveway corridor should be a minimum of 7.5m width which should be able to be accommodated on site. If this were to be 7.5 for the entire length of the frontage, then this would not be characteristic of most woodland access tracks and again be more urbanising in its appearance subject to detailing. The applicant has not yet demonstrated adequate turning on the site which may result in a more hammerhead arrangement being introduced. There are also no tracking drawings to demonstrate movement of service vehicles.

## **Landscape Proposals**

Response to Paragraphs 6.40 to 6.45 address issues of the landscape plans proposed for the site. The amendments do address concerns regarding the native character of the planting scheme and much more acceptable in principle.

6.43 states that the additional tree planting within the site will in time, restore and enhance the wooded character of the site and as they become established, the trees will subtly interrupt the elevations of the buildings within the views from locations to the east, thus improving the assimilation of the development into this wooded, settlement edge. In addition, trees have been positioned in order to maintain framed views experienced by the future residents of the new houses. Whilst this is the intended benefit of the landscape scheme it is not enough to mitigate the effect of the scale and magnitude of the development. Depending on the landscape scheme to reduce the impact of the urbanisation when the design has been laid out to capitalise on views

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outwards will cause conflict between the residents using the site and the walkers of the footpath. There will be a conflict of interests between screening the houses from the public footpath, maintaining the woodland character of the site, ensuring amenity spaces have sunlight and views, and residents wishing to impose their own character on the landscape.

## 7. Summary and Conclusion

7.2 I believe that the topography associated with the Taxal Edge ridgeline that extends across the rear of the site to be key in defining the perceived settlement edge in this location on the south-western edge of Whaley Bridge.

Response: We do not agree that the ridgeline is the perceived settlement edge but the beginning of the woodland edge. The slope of Taxal Edge is part of the wider landscape and represents a backdrop to the town. The wooded nature of the slope gives a distinctly different character and the scattered buildings existing within it at present, maintains this character.

Given my detailed consideration of the concerns raised by DCC and HPBC Officers, I believe the appeal proposals will be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses and will be of an appropriate scale for this aspect of Whaley Bridge. Furthermore, I consider the scheme to constitute good design that accords with many aspects of HPBC's Residential Design Guide SPD 2 and thus represents an appropriate design response to the appeal site's defining characteristics.

Response: For reasons previously stated we maintain that the proposed development does not relate well to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses. The scale is such to give a dominant affect in the surrounding landscape and has a distinctly different scale to the local residential development nearby. The HPBCs Residential Design Guide and SPD 2 give examples of typologies that are acceptable in Whaley Bridge, and these typologies are to be used in relation to the contextual setting of individual sites. The placing of hybrid typologies on the larger villa scale in a row with high elevations facing across the landscape will have a dominant effect and impact on the character of the woodland setting. For these reasons we consider the scheme is not acceptable and does not meet the standards of design required.

We therefore conclude that the scheme should be dismissed.

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Appendix: Initial consultation Responses on following pages:

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Original DCC Landscape Consultation Response dated 24.09.20, accessed from public website:

HPK/202/0301

Demolition of the existing building known as 'Taxal Edge and the detached garage building and erection of 7 No Dwellings.

184 Taxal Edge, Whaley Bridge

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## Landscape Comments:

Views of the site are contained by existing mature trees from many viewpoints; however the Public Right of Way HP/23/56/1 runs along the lane at the entrance to the site from Macclesfield Road and then along the south eastern boundary providing close views, sometime clear and sometimes through vegetation. The presence of this footpath is significant in increasing numbers of receptors and their experience of the character of the site.

Due to the well wooded nature of the site it has a distinct woodland character and contrasts with the adjacent built up character of the housing to the east. There is no development to the west and the site abuts countryside.

The proposal is to demolish the existing building, a large detached Edwardian Villa and construct 7 new dwellings. The Design and Access Statement states that the proposed dwellings would be located where the existing buildings are located. However, plots 5, 6 and 7 and garages to plot 7 are located outside the footprint of existing buildings. The proposals include extensive level changes, tree removal and road construction and as such I consider they would fundamentally change the character of the site including the lane and public footpath at the entrance and could not be considered to protect, enhance or restore the Landscape Character of the site. I consider that the proposed layout design is poor, particularly how level changes are imposed into the landscape with a multitude of driveways ramping up to houses with retaining walls, along with the turning area and passing places they provide an extremely poor frontage.

Information relating to existing trees in the application is vague, the tree survey concentrates on existing trees to the south and east of the site, and it does not seem to include trees to the north east of the site where most development is proposed. Some trees to be removed are shown on the existing Site Plan however no information is given regarding their quality or value. There are also several trees that are close to the proposed development area that would be affected by the works and at a site visit on 04/08/20 it was noted that felling had commenced to remove some of these trees. The proposed Site Plan and Landscape Works Plan show existing trees that are very close to dwellings and a new retaining wall to the north east boundary both of which are likely to have a significant impact on existing trees.

Tree planting shown on the Landscape Works Plan is mostly of small ornamental species, I consider that there is scope in places to accommodate larger growing species and suggest that Beech are included to be in keeping with the existing character of the site. Overall I consider the proposals to be very insensitive to the existing site features and the character of the site.

The proposed level changes and retaining walls in particular will have a significant and detrimental landscape impact at a local level. I would prefer a development that retains and converts the existing building. In this way the existing trees and overall character of the site could be preserved

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Original DCC Urban Design Consultation Response dated 16.09.20, accessed from Public website:

HPK/202/0301 Demolition of the existing building known as 'Taxal Edge' and the detached garage building and erection of 7 No Dwellings.

184 Taxal Edge, Whaley Bridge

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## Urban Design Comments:

The site lies outside the settlement boundary on the western edge of Whaley Bridge. There is a distinct change between built up character and woodland character landscape. The green belt designation falls to the western edge of this band of woodland. The site is banked above the B5470. When visiting the site, it was evident that changes are being made now with piles of rubble, stone and cut down trees, some that look like substantial Beech trees.

The lane presently consists of an unmade track and the creation of a hard surface driveway will significantly change the character and appearance of this soft edge to the current settlement boundary. Presently the wooded landscape is characteristic of the setting of the existing building, typical for a large detached Edwardian Villa of this period. The change to a linear form of three storey dwellings is a change that diminishes the landscape setting significantly.

I am concerned from public comments that the character of this access road has already been altered from a cobbled walkway with gritstone kerbs to a widened track. This loss is regrettable as it leads to a gradual erosion of the countryside character and prevents a proper assessment from being made. This alters the aesthetic value of this wooded approach, the character of the edge of settlement and the transition into countryside and the National Park.

Any increase in number of houses and vehicle activity on the access road close to Macclesfield Road needs to be considered. This may have implications on the design of the junction and subsequent loss of character of this edge of village. If it were the case that a more engineered highway solution would result, then I would consider this a significant loss of character.

The proposed houses will appear dominant and do not relate well to Beech Rise and Linglongs Road. The existing large Edwardian house is a two-storey building with hipped slate roofs and projecting bay windows. Having had several unsympathetic alterations over the years, with felt roof dormer, half-timber additions, and external metal staircases, it appears in a rundown condition. However, the option of restoring the building is still a possibility and it may have value as a non-designated heritage asset. I would support this approach.

A new substantial detached 2 storeys dwelling with three large dormers and large windows built to a more contemporary style with reclaimed natural grit stone brick, grey aluminium windows and blue/grey natural slate roof has been established on site. This is set back quite separately and elevated to the main building. This building replaces the previous classroom block and contrasts in style to the main building. My main concern is to ensure the sensitive treatment of the overall landscape setting around both buildings as at think this new house would be better to appear less dominant in the landscape setting.

On the proposals map, the site is located adjacent to but outside of the built-up boundary of Whaley Bridge. It is in the countryside between the built-up area boundary and the Green Belt. From an Urban Design perspective, the main consideration is whether the character relates well to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses and of an appropriate scale.

The 1843 – 1893 Map shows Taxal Wood below extending into Walker Brow. This natural woodland wedge with footpath HP23/56/1 traditionally defines the edge of settlement. The track leads to registered common land at Taxal Moor which suggests it is an historic route to and from the village.

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This has a heritage value and the changes to the track should be considered as it is diminishing this historical footpath by changing its character.

The later housing area backing onto the track gives a clear hard built up edge. The large buildings within the woodland area to the west of the track are in their own parkland setting of a distinctively different character. To extend a denser pattern of development into this woodland area is not very well connected with the existing pattern of development, it is also destroying the woodland character of the site to an extent of impacting on the character of the countryside edge. The applicant may suggest that it is a logical extension of the built edge towards the Macclesfield Road, but I would dispute this as it is the landscape character that is the defining element.

I think the long front driveways and gardens will emphasis the completely changed nature of the landscape setting and increase the amount of hard surface intrusion into this woodland area. Surfaces should be kept to a minimum. Despite showing trees retained next to Brewood to create a woodland gap, it has the effect of separating the group of houses within the site with no continuity.

The Scale is substantial when considered on mass. The bulk of the dwellings appear three storeys due to the large wide dormer windows. I also find the integral garages not a very authentic response in this woodland location. Image No2 showing a high wall to rear boundary and stepped retaining walls to allow for subterranean garages exaggerate the height of the houses, particularly at plot 7 showing the existing house with the garages in front. The overall impression is more of a modern town house development. This is not the response I would expect at this woodland edge and rural edge where I would expect a more traditional vernacular. I can see that the adjoining housing estate is of a similar grain with contemporary houses, but it is still the case that the development is not responsive to the actual site conditions and relies on significant remodelling. It is not contextual to the immediate site of the edge of settlement location. A more dispersed pattern and low-key development would be a better response.

The images show little remaining trees and a landscaped frontage with manicured lawned frontages. This will look unattractive in this location. These modern 'large Victorian villas' in terms of scale and massing, are exaggerated by the addition of the frontage terraces and garages and retaining walls which to me detracts from the overall architectural response.

The character of the original main building was that of a country residence standing in large grounds constructed around 1918. This character is typical of large detached Edwardian houses of that period found in such edge of settlement location within their own generous grounds. I would prefer to see a scheme that maintained the existing building and grounds as they are without extensive remodelling of the site or introduction of extensive hard surfaces with the existing trees and landscape layout remaining largely unaffected. The present application represents the extension of the existing residential use to the point of changing the whole character of the site. The long driveways are intrusive.

Conclusion: From an Urban Design Perspective, the current site has a significantly different character to the adjoining urban area and represents a characterful landscape transition to the adjoining countryside. It has a distinctive character and placemaking qualities that will be destroyed by the proposed development, which is overly dominant within this woodland setting and does not relate well to the adjoining suburban streets. A more low-key traditional development would be more in keeping with the few traditional houses remaining outside the settlement boundary. However, my preference would be for the retention and renovation/reuse of the main building than the proposed development of linear houses. The site required more sympathetic treatment of external works to be contextual to the current setting.