

HPK/2023/0061- Bridgemont

Landscape comments by Anton Cannell, Derbyshire Landscape and Placemaking

An LVIA has been undertaken for the site by Barnes Walker (Ref: M3645-PA-DOC-01-V02), photos within the assessment are stated as being taken during Feb 2023. I visited the site for the purpose of reviewing the LVIA and producing these comments on 23.06.2023. Overall, I consider that the methodology, scope and process used in the assessment are consistent with the guidelines detailed by GLVIA 3.

Application Proposals

The proposals are for an outline residential development accompanied by an illustrative layout of 42 dwellings accompanied by a typical block elevation plan and site sections drawing.

Site Context

The LVIA describes the site as follows :

'The application site lies at the settlement edge of Bridgemont, within the Green Belt. It comprises a linear tract of land between properties on the western side of Bridgemont and the railway to the west and incorporates a small car parking area that served the former Dog and Partridge public house. The site is currently used for storage of building materials and equipment and for keeping animals, primarily chickens.'

Whilst I agree with this statement it is important to consider that a large part of the site is unimproved grassland, and this should be included in a description of the site. I am aware there are Council Planning Enforcement Investigations regarding hard surfacing, storage of vehicles and other matters.

Landscape Character:

The LVIA describes the site as follows :

'The site falls within an area assessed to be Landscape Character Type (LCT) Settled Valley Pastures in The Landscape Character of Derbyshire and High Peak Borough Council Landscape Character SPD. This overlaps with LCT Valley Pastures with Industry in the Peak District National Park Authority Landscape Strategy.'

I would agree with this statement.

Derbyshire County Council's Areas of Multiple Environmental Sensitivity (AMES):

The LVIA describes the site as follows :

'The site, along with the entire housing area of Bridgemont and surrounding housing areas of Whaley Bridge, Chinley and Furness Vale appear to be located within an area of Secondary Significance' 'To the north-east of the study area a small portion of land that lies to the west of the Peak District National Park boundary, is located within an area of Primary Significance'

I would agree with this statement.

Listed Buildings:

The LVIA describes the site as follows :

'There are no listed buildings or heritage assets within the site. There are several listed buildings and structures within the wider study area generally associated with surrounding farmsteads or the Peak Forest Canal, the closest of which to the site is Grade II Listed aqueduct/horse tunnel located approximately 100m to the south-east.'

'No Listed Buildings Heritage Assets likely to be affected by the proposals'

I would agree with this statement.

Baseline Setting

LVIA photos of the site are taken with excavators and other large machines, site fencing and excavators on the site, the reason for given for their presence at the time is for storage, however I do not consider this situation can be considered the norm in terms of the character of the site which is currently used in part as a small holding and is in part as unimproved grassland meadow. I therefore consider these photos to be unrepresentative and portray a misleading impression that the site is already has associations with development.

The LVIA describes the landscape value as follows:

'The site is currently used for storage of building materials and machinery with protective boards and areas of hard standing. There is a small area enclosed with temporary steel mesh security fencing for keeping animals, primarily chickens. There are three trees on site of varying condition.'

'There are no features designated for their natural heritage value. The site is rough grassland, with large areas covered by boards or MOT, and is of limited wildlife value.'

'The land within the site has limited ecological value/natural function.'

'Low value – the limited landscape features within the site are considered to be of low value.'

I would disagree with the overall picture these statements paint of the site, when visited the site had several temporary buildings associated with the small holding but few areas of building materials and one item of machinery. A large proportion of the site is undisturbed unimproved grassland as shown on the photo below (approx. site boundary shown in red) with a range of wildflowers including orchids which were present in occasional areas.



Photo below-occasional orchids in meadow on site along southwestern boundary:



Existing Trees

Within the site boundary there are few existing trees and those that are proposed for removal would not have any significant effect on biodiversity or visual impacts. Adjacent to the site along the southwestern boundary, however, is a large group of semi mature trees which make a major contribution to local amenity and to screening views into the site from the southeast. Whilst these trees are proposed to be retained I would stress the importance of their long term survival and would agree with the findings of the Arboricultural Impact Assessment Review prepared for High Peak Borough Council (Ref PTC/2316 /003.03) which states that:

‘Trees to be retained in the proposed development will require space to be successfully retained after the development is finished. Therefore, consideration needs to be given to the pressures of residential occupation in relation to shading from trees, potential minor nuisances and growth potential’

‘The design of the future layout of any approved scheme should take these matters in to consideration and ensure that the proposed dwellings have adequate garden space unaffected by shading and / or overhang branches. Given the density of the indicative layout it may be that the number of plots needs to be reduced to achieve a more sustainable relationship between the trees and the proposed dwellings.’

Study Area and Visual Envelope

The LVIA selects 17 viewpoints which are located as follows in general terms:

Viewpoints 11,12,15,16,17 are views from close to the site in Bridgemont.

Viewpoints 7,8,9,10 are views from the west

Viewpoints 1,4,5,6,13 are views from the northeast

Viewpoints 2,3 are views from the southeast.

LVIA- *‘The receptors identified and their associated viewpoint photographs do not form an exhaustive list of all possible viewpoints, however they are considered to be representative of the current visual prominence of the application site.’*

Whilst I agree with the chosen visual envelope for the study area, overall, I do not consider that the chosen viewpoints adequately explore the potential visual impacts. I consider that the positions of the viewpoints and number of viewpoints to the northeast of the site, and particularly within the PDNP, have a tendency to underestimate the potential visibility of the site.

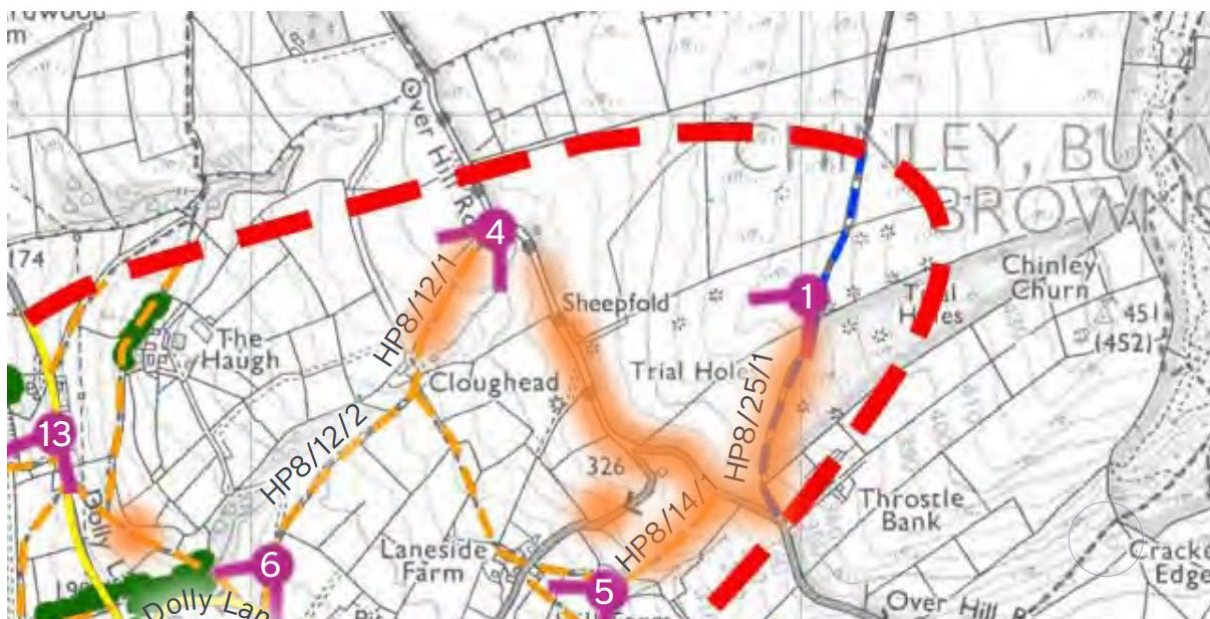
Viewpoint Assessments (general descriptions in italics are as described within the LVIA) see Appendix 1 for viewpoint location map.

Viewpoint 1. (situated within the PDNP) - *'from HP8/25/1 at an elevation of 390m AOD and a distance of circa 2.2km from the site.'*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment, however it should be noted that there are much better vantage points of the site within the PDNP closer to and below this viewpoint. The viewpoint position chosen has less visibility being further from the site and due to landform. There is better visibility from HP8/25/1 almost continuously descending the PRoW from Viewpoint 1 to Over Hill Road. There is also good visibility along Over Hill Road including the unsurfaced section of Over Hill Road where it continues beyond the surfaced road switchback. This track runs along the boundary of the PDNP, it is classified as 'other routes with public access' and is well used by walkers (see map below).

Below : map extract from LVIA showing LVIA viewpoints in the vicinity of the PDNP with areas shaded orange-brown to highlight areas with good visibility of the site that are not covered by the LVIA chosen viewpoints.



See photos below taken from positions along the routes shaded orange-brow on the map extract above showing good visibility of the site.

Photo below-PRoW HP/8?12/1 near VP4 and near to PDNP boundary



Photo below-Overhill Road northern unsurfaced section (along boundary of PDNP)



Photo below-Overhill Road surfaced section (along boundary of PDNP)

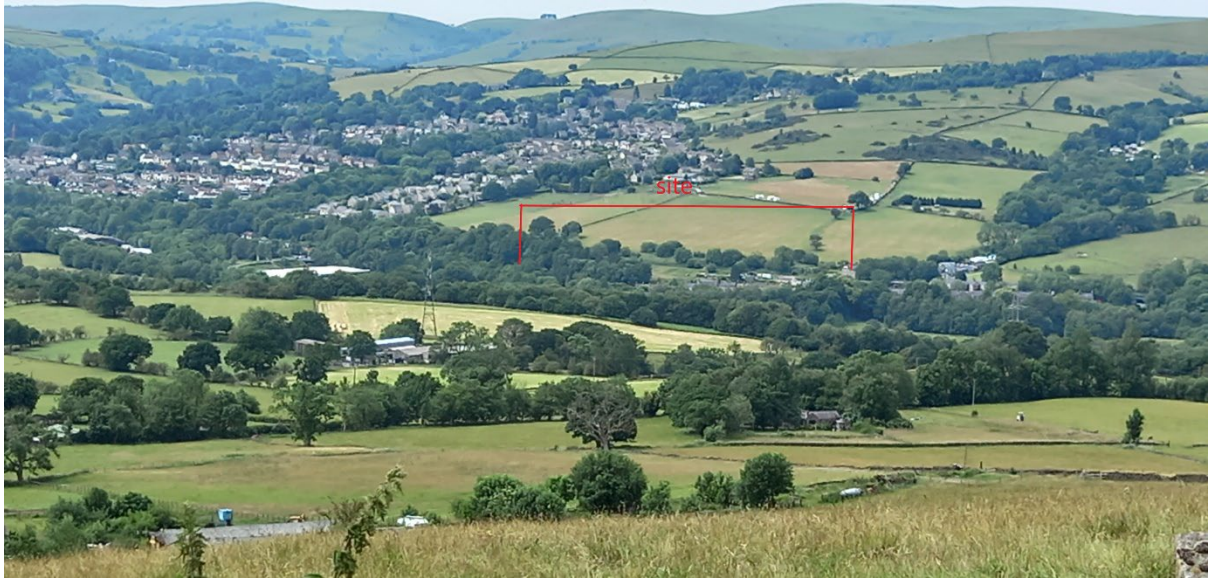


Photo below- from higher section of HP/8/25/1 (within the PDNP)



Photo below-from lower section of HP/8/25/1 (within the PDNP)



Viewpoint 2 – *‘from Eccles Pike at an elevation of 360m AOD and a distance of circa 2.5km from the site’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment due to the presence of the existing trees, the distance from the site and the wide panorama available in the view.

Viewpoint 3 – *‘from PRoW HP8/89/1 looking north-west, at an elevation of 280m AOD and a distance of circa 1.7km from the site.’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment due to the presence of the existing trees.

Viewpoint 4 – *‘from PRoW hp8/12/1 at an elevation of 310m AOD and a distance of circa 1.9km from the site’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would consider visual effects to be Minor Adverse, there is no existing vegetation to screen the proposed development or space to include significant structure planting, the site is higher and visible above the existing terrace housing. Whilst the site is a small part of the wider panorama the proposed development will be seen as an addition to existing development enlarging the settlement of Bridgement in the view.

Viewpoint 5 – *‘from HP8/14/1 at an elevation of 300m AOD and a distance of circa 1.7km from the site’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would consider visual effects to be Minor Adverse, there is no existing vegetation to screen the proposed development or space to include significant structure planting, the site is higher and visible above the existing terrace housing. Whilst the site is a small part of the wider panorama the proposed development will be seen as an addition to existing development enlarging the settlement of Bridgement in the view.

Viewpoint 6 – *‘from PRoW HP8/12/2 looking south-west towards the site, at an elevation of 240m AOD and a distance of circa 1km from the site’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 7 – *‘from PRoW HP23/9/1 at an elevation of 300m AOD and a distance of circa 1.4km from the site.’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 8 – *‘from PRoW HP23/10/2 at an elevation of 225m AOD and a distance of circa 580m from the site’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 9 – *‘from PRoW HP23/14/1 at an elevation of 200m AOD and a distance of circa 330m from the site’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 10 – *‘from PRoW HP23/15/1 at an elevation of 185m AOD and a distance of circa 150m from the site’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Minor Adverse.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 11 – *‘PRoW HP23/15/1 runs along the western side of the Buxton Railway Line, adjacent to the western boundary of the site.’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Moderate Adverse.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 12 – *‘PRoW HP23/14/2 is a short section of footpath that tracks in an east to west direction circa 20m to the north of the site.’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Medium-High sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Minor-Moderate Adverse.

I would consider visual effects to be Moderate Adverse.

Viewpoint 13 – *‘from Dolly Lane looking south-west towards the site, from an elevation of 190m AOD and a distance of circa 1km from the site.’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Low-Medium sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 14 – *‘from the B6062 adjacent to the Hope Valley Railway at an elevation of 180m AOD and a distance of circa 500m from the site.’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Low-Medium sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 15 – *‘from the A6 Buxton Road at a distance of circa 40m from the site.’*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Low-Medium sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Minor Adverse.

I would agree with this assessment.

Viewpoint 16 – *‘access road through Bridgemont settlement area’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Low-Medium sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Minor-Moderate Adverse reducing to Minor Adverse on maturity of proposed planting.

I would consider visual effects to be Moderate Adverse due to the hard engineering required to accommodate the steep level change and that the long-term effect of planting to soften this will not be significant.

Viewpoint 17 – *‘circa 60m to the south-east of site on the A5004 that runs north-south through Whaley Bridge’.*

The LVIA assesses receptors at this viewpoint of having a Low-Medium sensitivity and the significance of visual effects at year 1 to be Negligible Minor Adverse.

I would consider visual effects to be Minor Adverse with the new built form being visible as silhouettes against the sky through trees in winter.

Overall, I would agree with many of the assessments of likely visual effects, however, I consider that it is important to consider views in more detail than covered by the LVIA in the areas to the northeast of the site around the boundaries and within the PDNP. In these areas there is considerably more visibility that has not been represented in the LVIA.

Conclusion

Landscape Effects

The LVIA concludes:

‘Soft landscape proposals would increase the quantum and quality of the landscape features within the site and in doing so would improve it in terms of its aesthetic and its biodiversity. As a result, the landscape features of the site are expected to be subject to a landscape effect of Minor Beneficial at Year 1. ‘

The proposed site plan allows practically no opportunity to retain existing vegetation on site and would result in the loss of the majority of the meadow species present. The soft landscape proposals are primarily limited to rear gardens and small strips of landscape planting due to confined space. I therefore disagree that the proposals would improve the site in terms of its aesthetics and biodiversity and consider that landscape effects are likely to be Moderate Adverse at Year 1.

Visual Landscape Effects

The LVIA concludes:

‘Due to existing built form and screening trees and woodland, the site and the proposed development therein would be relatively discrete and would not generate any significant levels of adverse visual effect. ‘

‘The surrounding high ground, which is in part located within the National Park incorporates numerous PRoW and CROW access land and as a result, the visual envelope for the site is extensive. However, in most cases, the site and the proposed development therein will represent a very subtle change to the expansive views experienced and where discernible, the low levels of change are considered to be consistent with the character and appearance of the lower valley landscape.’

I would disagree with these statements. Whilst the existing trees to the southeast boundary of the site would form an effective screen to views from the southeast and existing vegetation around field boundaries effectively screen the site from the west, the mid and northern part of the site is very open and higher than existing terraced housing in Bridgemont.

The site is a long narrow parcel of land with little opportunity for any meaningful tree planting to create an effective screen to views . Due to the high levels of the site and clear visibility any proposed development to the mid part and north of the site would be clearly visible above the lower existing terraced housing. This is confirmed by the Indicative Site Sections Drawing 311106 07 P3.

The wider landscape also rises considerable to the northeast, and this provides clear views from this higher ground including several PRoW, some within the PDNP. Although the LVIA acknowledges greater visibility from the northeast it does not consider the cumulative effect of development of the site would have in expansive views. I would therefore consider visual impacts from several viewpoints of high sensitivity within the PDNP to be Moderate/Minor Adverse.

Overall, the LVIA assesses landscape visual effects for viewpoints as follows:

11 as Negligible Adverse,

1 as Negligible Minor Adverse,

2 as Minor Adverse,

2 as Minor Moderate Adverse

1 as Moderate Adverse.

In comparison I would consider landscape visual effects for these viewpoints to comprise:

9 as Negligible Adverse,

5 as Minor Adverse

3 as Moderate Adverse.

In addition, I would consider at least 5 additional viewpoints within the PDNP to have visual effects of Moderate Minor Adverse.

In conclusion I would support the Greenbelt status of the site considering it forms an important function in separation of development between Whaley Bridge and Bridgmont from the prospect of the PDNP. In addition, I consider that the value of the existing unimproved grassland forming a substantial part of the site to be considerably greater than suggested by the LVIA.

APPENDIX 1

Viewpoint map extract from LVIA (Ref: M3645-PA-DOC-01-V02).

