8 Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment

8.1. Introduction

This Chapter outlines the townscape and visual baseline of the site and considers the potential for significant effects of the proposed redevelopment on both townscape character and visual amenity. As agreed through consultation at the scoping stage, a 'simple' assessment has been undertaken to identify the likely significance of potential effects. The approach and method used to undertake the townscape and visual impact assessment is explained in detail in section 8.2 of this chapter.

The proposed development is described in Chapter 2 Scheme Description, but in summary, comprises the redevelopment of a site in West Gorton, East Manchester. The proposals include the demolition of a number of existing buildings (primarily residential) including two high rise apartment blocks, and their replacement with a new residential neighbourhood comprising buildings of appropriate scale and massing, to accord with MCC / NEM aspirations for the site as set out in the East Manchester Regeneration Strategy 2008-2018 (NEM, 2007). Within the site, there are a number of existing residential properties, which will be retained and incorporated into the development as part of a Masterplan for the site.

8.1.1. Legislation and Planning Policy

The local planning context of the site is set out in the MCC UDP (adopted 1995) which designates various parts of the site for new housing and housing improvements. The UDP will be replaced by Manchester City LDF, which is currently undergoing consultation and is expected to be adopted in 2012, but provides a guide to emerging policy. The emerging Core Strategy (Consultation Draft, February 2011) from the City of Manchester LDF identifies the site within the East Manchester Regeneration Area. The site and its surrounding area is described in paragraph 2.53 where it states that:

"East Manchester also includes the mainly residential area of Gorton. The loss of industry had major knock-on effects for the viability of both housing and retail in the area. Social housing developments from the 1960s and 1970s replaced much of the densely gridded terraced housing, particularly in north and west Gorton, lowering the number of properties and creating a pattern of irregular streets, with unsafe alleyways and inadequate parking provision, along with a housing stock that has failed to stand the test of time."

In addition, a key challenge identified for the East Manchester area is to:

"Establish a series of secure well managed neighbourhoods of choice each with a high-quality environment served by vibrant district centres."

The Masterplan for the site has been developed in accordance with the East Manchester Regeneration Strategy 2008-2018 and emerging policy within the Core Strategy. The urban design will be undertaken with reference to policy EN1, in particular which states that:

"All development in Manchester will be expected to follow the seven principles of urban design, as identified in national planning guidance ...and have regard to the strategic character area in which the development is located. Opportunities for good design to enhance the overall image of the City should be fully realised, particularly on major radial and orbital road and rail routes. Design and Access Statements submitted with proposals for new development must clearly detail how the proposed development addresses the design principles, reinforces and enhances the local character of that part of the City and supports the achievement of the Core Strategy Strategic Objectives."

The seven principles of urban design refer to those identified in 'By Design' a key document referenced in PPS 1. The principles are:

- *"Character: a place with its own identity;*
- *Continuity and enclosure: a place where public and private places are clearly distinguished;*
- *Quality of the public realm: a place with attractive, and successful outdoor areas;*
- *Ease of movement: a place that is easy to get to and move through;*
- *Legibility: a place that has a clear image and is easy to understand;*

- *Adaptability: a place that can change easily; and*
- *Diversity: a place with variety and choice."*

Policy EN1 defines the character of a number of Strategic Character Areas within the city. The site at West Gorton lies within Area 6: Central Arc Character Area which is described as follows:

"The character of the area we have today is predominantly one of 1960's social housing estates and zoned industrial areas bisected by the transport network and largely resulting from the comprehensive redevelopment of the past... Much of the Central Arc is experiencing regeneration with some contemporary urban solutions, for example in Hulme, now complete, and some still to be progressed."

It goes on to say that:

"The opportunity exists for development on a large scale using innovative urban design solutions. These should use District Centres and key nodes of public transport as focal points and involve existing communities."

The emerging Core Strategy also includes a number of Spatial Objectives. Policy SP 1 provides key spatial principles, which will guide the strategic development of Manchester to 2027, and includes a number of Core Development Principles. In relation to landscape character and built heritage, SP 1 states that:

"Development in all parts of the City should:-

- *Make a positive contribution to neighbourhoods of choice including:-*
    - *creating well designed places that enhance or create character…*
    - *protect and enhance the built and natural environment "*

8.2. Methodology

8.2.1. Scope of Assessment

This chapter describes the existing townscape and visual resource of the study area. It considers how the proposed redevelopment at West Gorton may have an impact upon townscape character and visual amenity and where possible, advises on mitigation and compensation measures that should be implemented to avoid, reduce or offset potential townscape and visual impacts. In the context of this project the 'landscape' comprises an area of urban landscape or 'townscape'. As the study area is primarily urban / built-up, the term 'townscape' has been used rather than landscape. Both terms are however interchangeable, depending on the nature and context of the area.

The townscape and visual assessment aims to identify the significance of the potential townscape and visual impacts of the proposed development upon the site and surrounding area.

Townscape impacts are those associated with a development relate to changes to the fabric, character and quality of the landscape resource and how it is experienced.

Visual impacts relate closely to landscape impacts, but also concern changes in views. Visual assessment is concerned with people's perception and response to changes in visual amenity.

Landscape and visual impacts are interrelated, but assessed separately. Both landscape and visual impacts can be positive (beneficial) or negative (adverse).

A scoping study was undertaken in spring 2011 to broadly determine the townscape and visual constraints associated with the site to inform both the development of the masterplan and the extent and scope of further assessment. The scoping exercise included a high level appraisal of the potential effects associated with the proposed redevelopment upon existing townscape character and visual amenity, during both the construction and operation phases of the project. The scoping study concluded that:

- The construction phase assessment will be limited to visual amenity only, as townscape effects are not likely to be significant and would also be temporary in nature; and
- The operational effects of the scheme have potential for significant beneficial effects on townscape and visual amenity, through enhancement of the site.

So, although it was identified that the scheme is unlikely to have any significant adverse effects at the operation stage, the EIA Regulations 2011 state that an assessment is required wherever potentially *'significant effects'* are predicted. The regulations do not distinguish between potentially significant *adverse* effects and potentially significant *beneficial* effects. As such, the Scoping Report (AECOM, 2011) proposed to include a townscape and visual assessment as part of the EIA. However, due to the conclusions of the scoping report, it was proposed to restrict further study to that of a 'simple' assessment. This approach was deemed appropriate due to the highly localised and potentially beneficial nature of the predicted effects, and the outline nature of the planning application. This was agreed with MCC and a number of other statutory consultees, including NE and EH, through consultation on the Scoping Report (AECOM, 2011).

The 'simple' nature of the assessment limits the focus of the TVIA to potentially significant effects only, and as such does not include an assessment of townscape effects during construction (as construction activity is unlikely to temporarily, or permanently affect character), or any assessment of effects in year 15 (as planting is not likely to change the significance of the residual landscape or visual effects assessed) although landscape proposals have been considered at a general level as part of the assessment of residual effects.

Further consultation was undertaken with MCC in spring 2012 to agree receptors for the visual impact assessment. It was agreed that a receptor group based approach was more appropriate than an assessment of typical or representative viewpoints, due to the highly localised nature of potential effects on receptors, which are located within or immediately adjacent to the site. The agreed visual receptor groups are illustrated on Figure 8.2 Aerial Photograph and Key Receptors and assessed in the visual impact section.

8.2.2. Method

The Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment has been undertaken by a Chartered Landscape Architect with reference to the following documents:

- Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) produced by The Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA), 2nd Edition (Spon 2002); and
- Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (2002) by the Countryside Agency and Scottish Natural Heritage.

The GLVIA guidelines acknowledge a relationship between the perception of landscape character and the experience of viewers (referred to as receptors – residents, people in their workplace, attending school, using recreational facilities, using the countryside, etc.). GLVIA relies on an appreciation of the existing landscape, its sensitivity to change, an understanding of the development proposals, the magnitude of change that would result from the proposals and the potential to mitigate impacts. There are four key stages to the assessment:

1. Recording and analysis of the character, quality, value and sensitivity to change of the existing landscape;
2. An appreciation of the nature, form and features of the proposed development;
3. An assessment of the magnitude of change likely to result from the development; and
4. Evaluation of the significance of the changes identified based on magnitude of change and sensitivity.

In undertaking the assessment, a combination of desk based study and site survey have been undertaken to determine the landscape, planning and visual constraints associated with the site. Site survey was undertaken in May / June 2011 and February / March 2012.

As part of the desk study, the following sources of information have been used to inform the townscape and visual assessment:

- GLVIA (second edition, Published by The Landscape Institute (LI) and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (IEMA), Spon Press 2002);
- MCCs UDP, Adopted 1995;
- MCCs LDF, Consultation Draft 2011;
- East Manchester Regeneration Strategy 2008-2018, NEM, 2007;
- NPPF (2012);
- PPS 1: Delivering Sustainable Development, 2005[1];
- By Design - Urban Design in the Planning System: Towards Better Practice, DETR, 2000;
- Manual for Streets, Department for Transport (DfT), 2007;
- Manchester Streetscape Manual – Residential Streets, MCCs, June 2009;
- Manchester Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation, Interim Report, The GMAU, June 2009;
- Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance, Adopted April 2007;
- Detailed Planning Applications for the following plots 2, 2.1, 5, 7 and 8 within or adjacent to the site (refer to Figure 1.2);
- Braidwater Ltd. ES for redevelopment of the Olympic Storage Depot and M&A Demolition Yard, Turley Associates, 2008;
- OS Mapping (Current and Historic);
- Aerial Photography; and
- Field Survey Data.

8.2.3. Townscape Character, Scenic Quality and Value

Townscape character is a composite of physical and cultural elements. Landform, hydrology, vegetation, land cover, land use, pattern, cultural and historic features and associations combine to create a common '*sense of place*' and identity which can be used to characterise the townscape.

The sensitivity of a townscape to change varies according to the nature of the existing resource and the nature of the proposed change. The townscape resources within the study area that could be affected by the proposed development include:

- Physical resources such as buildings, open space, landform, trees, woodland, watercourses etc.;
- Townscape character areas; and
- Cultural heritage interests that contribute to townscape character.

Field assessment studies were used to check the potential visibility of the proposed development from the townscape resources within the study area. Specific consideration is also given to changes to landscape elements such as woodland or trees in the context of the level of information available at an outline application stage.

The sensitivity of a townscape character receptor is an expression of its ability to accommodate the development as part of its own character. This is dependent on the value, scenic quality, and existing character of the receptor.

Value

The value of a townscape character receptor is a reflection of its importance in terms of any designations that may apply, or its importance in itself as a landscape or townscape resource, which may be due to its ecological, cultural or recreational value. A receptor that lies within the boundary of a recognised landscape or townscape related planning designation, such as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) or a Conservation Area, will be of high to very high value, depending on the proportion of the receptor that is covered and the level of importance - international, national, regional or local - of the designation. It is important to note that the absence of designations does not preclude local resource value, as an undesignated townscape character receptor

[1] Although the NPPF was published and immediately came into force on the 27th March 2012, previous PPS remain a material consideration for the subsequent 12 months.

may be important as a resource in the local or immediate environment due to its relative rarity. The higher the value of a receptor the greater is its sensitivity to the development. Value is assessed as being **High**, **Medium** or **Low**.

Scenic Quality

Scenic Quality relates to the intrinsic aesthetic appeal demonstrated by a character area, zone, feature or component within the townscape. An assessment of Scenic Quality has been carried out based on a five point scale and evaluated against the following criteria:

Highest Quality - Contributing together to create a stimulating composition, which is aesthetically and scenically outstanding; or which is an outstanding example in the area of well cared for townscape or set of features;

Very Attractive - Contributing together to create a composition, which is aesthetically and scenically pleasing, or which is a good example in the area of a reasonably well cared for townscape or set of features;

Good Townscape - Contributing together to create a composition, which is aesthetically and scenically unremarkable, or an area of or set of features which is neutral or of mixed character;

Ordinary Townscape - Contributing together to create a composition, which is aesthetically and scenically poor, or which is an example of an un-stimulating landscape or set of features; or with few or poorly related/ unrelated features; and

Poor Townscape - Contributing together to create a composition, which is aesthetically and scenically very poor, or which is an example of monotonous unattractive visually conflicting or degraded townscape or set of features.

The values ascribed in the analysis of Scenic Quality are only related to townscapes in the local context.

8.2.4. Assessment Criteria

Townscape Assessment Criteria

Sensitivity to Change

The methodology used in this assessment adopts the terminology within current best practice of assessing "*Sensitivity to Change*" (GLVIA). The assessment of the townscape sensitivity to change remains specifically related to the proposal. The extent to which the townscape components and townscape zones would accommodate and tolerate the type of change which would be caused by the development proposed both during construction and during operation, is assessed by consideration of the following factors:

- The change proposed;
- The ability of the townscape components which are physically affected to accommodate the change proposed; and
- The ability of the wider townscape and its components to accommodate the change proposed.

It should be noted that although this assessment may be influenced by townscape value it is not necessarily the case that a highly valued townscape is also a highly sensitive one.

The townscape sensitivity has been evaluated on a relative basis within the study area and is described by a three point scale, using the following criteria:

High Sensitivity - A townscape of particularly distinctive character susceptible to relatively small changes of the type proposed;

Medium Sensitivity - A townscape of moderately valued characteristics reasonably tolerant of change of the type proposed;

Low Sensitivity - A relatively unimportant townscape, which is potentially tolerant of a substantial change of the type proposed.

Magnitude of Proposed Change

Magnitude of change is an expression of the scale and type of change on townscape character receptors that will result from the development. The variables involved are described below:

- The extent of the receptor that may be affected by the development: Iie. if the development influences a very limited part of the townscape, the magnitude of change will generally be lower;
- The degree of change in character of the receptor: i.e. the greater the degree of contrast between the existing and the proposed character the higher the magnitude of change; and
- The degree of change in the quality and value of the townscape: i.e. the greater the degree to which the development results in a loss of elements of quality or value or their introduction the higher the magnitude of change.

The following criteria have been used to describe the magnitude of change:

High - Notable change in Townscape characteristics over an extensive area ranging to a very intensive change over a more limited area;

Medium - Moderate change in localised area;

Low - Virtually imperceptible change in townscape components; and

Negligible - No discernible change in any component.

Visual Impact Assessment Criteria

The evaluation and impacts assessment has involved consideration of the extent to which the proposals would change the composition and character of the existing view (magnitude of change) and the sensitivity of receptors based on the information gathered through site survey and analysis of the planning and design proposals.

Sensitivity

Sensitivity considers the nature of the receptor, for example a residential dwelling is generally more sensitive to change than a factory unit. The importance of the view experienced by the receptor also contributes to an understanding of how sensitive that receptor is to change. Scenic quality and value of the view are therefore considered.

In this assessment sensitivity is ranked as follows:

High Sensitivity – Primary views from residential properties. Receptors within sensitive landscapes (e.g. where the scenic value is assessed as high or outstanding).

Medium Sensitivity – Road users and rights of way within recreation and tourist areas. Areas of public open space / recreation areas.

Low Sensitivity – Users of main roads and other arterial transportation routes. Places of work / industrial zones.

Magnitude of Change

Magnitude of change considers the extent of development visible, the percentage of the existing view newly occupied by the development, the influence of the development within the view and viewing distance from the receptor to the development. In this assessment magnitude is ranked as follows:

High - Where the project would cause a substantial change in the composition and character of the view.

Medium - Where the project would cause a noticeable change in the composition and character of the view.

Low - Where the project would cause a barely perceptible change in the composition and character of the view.

Negligible - Where there is no discernible change in the composition and character of the view.

8.2.5. Assessment of Significance

The nature of each effect is based on the ability of the townscape character or visual receptor to accommodate the development, and the appearance of the development within the receiving context and is assessed to be beneficial or adverse. A change to the townscape or visual resource is not considered to be adverse simply because it constitutes an alternation to the existing situation.

Townscape

The following terms have been used to define residual effects on the townscape resources:

- **Adverse** - the proposed development results in direct loss of physical resources, weakens key characteristics or negatively affects the integrity of a townscape designation; and
- **Beneficial** - the proposed development may replace physical resources or strengthen the townscape characteristics.

Table 8.1 outlines the categories of significance of effect relating to townscape character.

Table 8.1 Significance of Effect Categories (Townscape Character)

Significance of Impact	Description
Major Beneficial (positive) impact	- The proposals form an essential part of a strategy to redevelop a major area of dereliction leading to establishment of a new and attractive urban environment.
Moderate beneficial (positive) impact	- The proposals significantly enhance the form and pattern of the townscape; - They further national objectives to regenerate degraded urban areas; and - There is potential through mitigation, to establish a comprehensive landscape design which enhances the existing character of the area or introduces a new attractive character/identity.
Minor beneficial (positive) impact	- The proposals fit well with the scale, landform and pattern of the townscape; - They incorporate measures for mitigation to ensure they would blend in well with the surrounding townscape or complement, restore or extend partially formed townscape character/framework; and - Maintain or enhance existing townscape character in an area.
Negligible (Neutral) impact	- The proposals are well designed to complement the scale, landform and pattern of the townscape; - They incorporate measures for mitigation to ensure that the scheme would blend in well with surrounding landscape features and elements; and - They avoid conflict with national policies towards protection of urban areas.
Minor adverse (negative) impact	- The proposals are out of scale with the existing townscape; - Are partially visually obtrusive; - Detrimentally affect an area of recognised townscape quality; and - They cannot be substantially mitigated for because of the nature of the proposal itself or the character of the wider townscape.
Moderate adverse (negative) impact	- The proposals are out of scale with the townscape; - Are visually obtrusive and would have an adverse impact on the townscape; - Mitigation would not prevent the scheme from scarring the townscape in the longer term as some features of interest would be partly destroyed or their setting diminished; and - They would have an adverse impact on a townscape of recognised quality or on vulnerable and important characteristic features or elements.
Major adverse (negative) impact:	- The proposals would be clearly incompatible with the scale and pattern of the local townscape; - Would be visually intrusive and would disrupt fine and valued views of the area; - They are likely to degrade, diminish or even destroy the integrity of a range of characteristic features and elements or their setting; - They would be substantially damaging to a high quality or highly vulnerable townscape causing it to change and be considerably diminished in quality; - Cannot be adequately mitigated for; and

	- Impacts of moderate and above are considered to be significant, as this is the level at which features would be clearly perceived.

Visual

The following terms have been used to define residual effects on the visual resources:

- **Adverse** - the proposed development results in a loss of visual amenity; and
- **Beneficial** - the visual amenity is improved by the proposed development.

Table 8.2 below outlines the categories of significance of effect relating to visual amenity.

Table 8.2 Significance of Effect Categories (Visual Amenity)

Significance of Impact	Description
Major beneficial impact	Where the proposal would cause a very noticeable improvement in the existing views/visual amenity.
Moderate beneficial impact	Where the proposal would cause a noticeable improvement in the existing view.
Minor beneficial impact	Where the proposal would cause a barely perceptible improvement in the existing view.
Negligible (i.e. Neutral)	Where there is no discernible improvement or deterioration in the existing view.
Minor adverse impact	Where the proposal would cause a barely perceptible deterioration in the existing view.
Moderate adverse impact	Where the proposal would cause a noticeable deterioration in the existing view.
Major adverse impact	Where the proposal would cause a very noticeable deterioration in the existing view.

Impacts of moderate and above are considered to be significant, as this is the level at which features would be clearly perceived.

8.2.6. Assumptions and Limitations

The following limitations and assumptions apply to the landscape and visual assessment that has been undertaken:

- Assessment has been based on the Indicative Masterplan (Figure 2.3) and agreed parameter plan (Figure 2.1). The masterplan has been prepared as part of an outline planning application and as such, full details of the scheme are not available at the time of the assessment. Therefore, certain assumptions (as detailed below) have been made, and consideration of the sensitivity of this topic to the range of parameters proposed considered in Chapter 4 EIA;
- Assumptions relating to the design of the proposals were agreed with the client and design team and are listed in the assessment section of this chapter (Section 8.4);
- Details of the construction works were not available at the time of the assessment and reasonable worst case assumptions have been made. These are outlined in the description of temporary construction impacts in Section 8.4.1; and
- The visual impact assessment has been undertaken from publicly accessible viewpoints only, so where potential receptors located on private land have been identified, professional judgement has been used to undertake the visual assessment based on the closest public viewpoints and views of receptors from the development site.

8.3. Baseline Conditions

8.3.1. Introduction to the Site and its Setting

The site is located approximately 3 km south east of Manchester City Centre in West Gorton, north of the railway sidings at Longsight, and between the A57 (Hyde Road), the A6010 (Pottery Lane) and the Manchester to Hadfield / Glossop railway line. The site location is shown on Figure 1.1.

The site primarily comprises a series of interconnected 1960-70s era housing estates, based on the historic street pattern, but supplemented by a number of cul-de-sacs, which are accessed from the main streets of Clowes Street, Wenlock Way and Bennett Street. Housing primarily comprises two storey terraced homes, but also includes a small number of bungalows (which are believed to be sheltered housing), three and four storey blocks of flats, and two high rise apartment blocks. Streets within the estate are interlinked by a series of alleyways, pedestrianised walkways, and small areas of communal green space, all in varying states of disrepair. Although primarily residential, the site also includes:

- A former demolition yard and the Olympic Freight Terminal, a container storage facility in the north west corner of the site;
- A small number of local community facilities, including Armitage School in the south west corner of the site, a small public park (Kniveton Community Park) with play area in the centre-north, a medical centre, a row of shops forming a small precinct (including a pharmacy, chip shop, convenience store and community rooms) , a working men's club and the former Aces public house in the central east part of the site;
- Small to medium scale warehousing within Vaughan Industrial Estate in the north east and small scale (mostly defunct/derelict) businesses at the junction of Clowes Street and Hyde Road in the south of the site;

- Manchester Climbing Centre in the former St Benedict's Anglican Church, a Grade II* Listed Building in the centre north;
- A wide grass buffer with tree belts to the eastern boundary;
- Areas of inaccessible, unmanaged, semi-derelict land where buildings have been previously demolished on the north side of Bennett Street and south of Clowes Street; and
- A 800m (approximate) section of Hyde Road.

The site is part of a regeneration area and as such, also contains a small number of sites which are either under construction, or that have been recently completed. These developments are at differing stages of construction but appear to comprise a mix of modern, semi-detached housing (between Clowes Street and Reabrook Avenue, and along the southern boundary of the site adjacent to Hyde Road) and four storey flats (adjacent to Hyde Road) (Please refer to Section 2.1 of this Volume of the ES). Construction activity is evident in a number of areas and the site also includes contractors' compounds, material storage areas and fenced areas of temporary car parking.

As described in the emerging LDF Core Strategy, the townscape character of West Gorton is heavily influenced by the low architectural quality of the social housing estates developed in the 1960's and 1970's, which dominate the style of built form within the site. This is particularly noticeable in areas where properties are unoccupied and buildings are in a poor state of repair. In a number of cases buildings have been boarded up and a number appear semi-derelict in appearance. The irregular pattern of the streets, and over reliance upon cul-de-sac's and alleyways to permit movement within the estates has created the perception of an unsafe environment, which is reinforced by the dilapidated appearance of the public realm. Where buildings have been demolished, or where derelict land has been neglected, the site has a semi-derelict appearance and areas of waste ground have become a focus for antisocial activity, including fly tipping.

The Manchester Climbing Centre, located in the former St Benedict's Church is a distinctive and unique feature of the townscape and its setting includes a small public park, the only area of formal open space within the site, which contains a number of mature trees and forms a distinct vegetated townscape feature. The church tower, a local landmark, is somewhat overshadowed by the two high rise apartment blocks, located on higher ground to the south.

The north western part of the site is dominated by industrial development at the Olympic Freight Terminal and former demolition yard which are enclosed by high boundary walls, and are industrial in character. The sites contribute little to the wider character of the townscape and the majority of existing buildings are industrial in style; a number of which appear to be in a poor state of repair.

The character of the immediate townscape of the site is heavily influenced by the scale of adjacent major transport corridors including two railway lines, the large scale railway sidings, and the A57 and A6010 road corridors, both of which are major transportation links at a city level. Much of the immediate setting to the south, west and north comprises industrial buildings and land uses focussed around the major transport routes and there are very few townscape features of note. The wider urban context includes industrial areas within Ardwick to the west; residential areas in Longsight to the south and west; Belle Vue industrial area and stadium to the south east; residential and industrial areas within Gorton to the east; and industrial and commercial land, associated with the A635 road corridor in Openshaw and Beswick to the north.

8.3.2. Townscape and Visual Context

The townscape and visual context of the site is illustrated on Figure 8.1 Visual Analysis which illustrates that the majority of the site is well enclosed by the variety of built form within the immediate surroundings, and that the site forms part of an isolated urban area surrounded by key transport routes including major roads and railway infrastructure. Photographs 1-16 (Figures 8.3-8.10) illustrate the character of the site.

At its eastern end, the site is enclosed by an area of commercial and industrial development at Vaughan Industrial Estate to the north, which predominantly comprises small and medium scale traditional, red brick warehousing (in varying states of disrepair), but also includes more modern, large scale office development including the regional council office at the former Fujitsu site (including a high rise tower), which bounds the site on the north side of Wenlock Way and to the east of the park on Kniveton

Road. At its western end, the site is enclosed by two branches of the railway, one line on high embankment to the north, and the other located on a red brick viaduct to the west. In both directions the railway provides a strong sense of enclosure and restricts views into and out of the site. To the north, the railway on embankment separates the site from the wider industrial townscape context at Ardwick, between the railway and Ashton Old Road. To the west and south west, the viaduct restricts intervisibility between the site and the adjacent bus depot and commercial developments as well as residential areas south of Hyde Road in Longsight, developments which themselves further enclose West Gorton in the wider context.

To the south and east the site is bound by adjacent road corridors, the A57 Hyde Road, and A6010 Pottery Lane, respectively. Hyde Road is a key route in and out of the city and forms the immediate townscape setting. The south side of Hyde Road is characterised by large to medium scale commercial and industrial buildings and land uses including a number of vehicle sales yards. Many of the larger scale buildings are unoccupied and are set within large areas of semi derelict car parking / hardstanding and / or beyond wide grass verges or vacant sites. A number of the buildings side or back onto Hyde Road, which creates large expanses of inactive frontage on this key route into the city. The disused, semi-derelict character and scale / layout of development on Hyde Road emphasises the width and of the road corridor, and has a detrimental influence on the character of the streetscape. The commercial / industrial development on Hyde Road forms part of a wider commercial / industrial area which, in combination with large scale infrastructure associated with railway sidings at Longsight, provide an industrial character and sense of enclosure to the south of the site, restricting all but the most localised of views.

To the east, the site is enclosed by mass screen planting on embankments either side of Pottery Lane dual carriageway, and by large a scale commercial building north of the junction between Pottery Lane and Hyde Road. Pottery Lane creates a barrier between the site and residential areas in Gorton to the east, which further isolates the site from the surrounding townscape. The combination of planting, built form and the width of Pottery Lane provide a strong sense of separation, and a visual barrier between the site and residential areas in Gorton to the east.

The most dominant elements of the site visible from the wider townscape are the two high rise tower blocks. However, due to the density of urban development in the wider context and lack of publicly accessible areas to the north of the site, open views of the tower blocks are limited to a small number of views. As such, they are not prominent elements within the townscape.

Within the site, views are primarily restricted to those along streets from the existing road network as the site is well developed. Existing construction operations are also a feature of the site, particularly to the south and east, where hoardings restrict intervisibility between residential areas and the A57 Hyde Road corridor.

In summary, the built-up, primarily industrial / commercial character of the area, and proximity of large scale rail and highway infrastructure within the immediate townscape setting substantially restrict intervisibility between the site and the wider townscape. In general terms, views of the site are limited to those from the immediate context, and to a small number of receptors primarily located within or immediately adjacent to the site i.e. within West Gorton.

Due to the enclosed nature of the site and lack of intervisibility with the surrounding townscape, the Study Area has been restricted to land south and east of the two railway lines, and north and west of the A57 (Hyde Road) and A6010 (Pottery Lane).

8.3.3. Landscape Character

At a national level the character of England has been defined by NE's 2005 National Character Areas (NCAs) assessment. The site lies within NCA 55: Manchester Conurbation. The description of character primarily relates more natural elements within the city such as river corridors, green infrastructure and the interaction between the city and its landscape setting at the urban edge. As such, the character assessment undertaken at this scale does not relate specifically to the character of the urban landscape / townscape, or the site and wider study area.

At a local level, no formal assessment of landscape/townscape character has been undertaken by the local authority. For the purposes of this assessment, a high level townscape character assessment has been undertaken to determine the baseline conditions, a description of which follows.

8.3.4. Townscape Character

The townscape of the study area is described in broad terms above. A high level assessment of townscape character has been undertaken as part of this assessment and following key characteristics have been identified:

- Mix of residential and industrial / commercial development from variety of eras, and of variety of scales, ranging from late nineteenth century to modern day, in varying states of use and disrepair;
- Key transport corridors and rail infrastructure provides a physical and visual barrier at the edge of the study area, and provides a strong sense of enclosure sense and isolation, separating the area from the wider townscape;
- Social housing estates from 1960-70s predominate, with layout based on historic street pattern but supplemented by numerous cul-de-sacs, alley ways, and pedestrianisation of former streets;
- Three high rise towers (two residential and one commercial) are locally prominent features which appear incongruous in terms of scale within an area of predominantly 2-4 storey buildings;
- In general, the area is dilapidated in character and appearance. This is reinforced by the presence of semi-derelict, disused and vacant land scattered throughout the area which has detrimental influence on character throughout, but particularly prominent where located along main routes such as Hyde Road;
- Combination of enclosed, complex pattern of cul-de-sacs and alleyways, low quality, unoccupied buildings and in a number of case boarded up buildings, and dilapidated character of public realm creates perception of unsafe environment;
- Wide grass verges with occasional belts of screen planting adjacent to major road corridors provides a level of amenity, at the periphery of the area, though open space does not appear well used in these locations;
- Mature trees within a small area of public open space provides a distinctive, mature and green feature in centre of the site;
- Remnants of historic townscape are limited within the area, but do include St Benedict's Church, a local landmark at the study area level, three short rows of traditional 'back to back' red brick terraces north of Hyde Road, traditional warehousing in the north east of the area, and the railway viaduct, the archways of which provide gateways to the area; and
- Signs of regeneration throughout the area with development of small pockets of new housing.

Townscape Value:	**Low**
Townscape Scenic Quality:	**Poor Townscape**
Sensitivity to Change:	**Low Sensitivity**

8.3.5. Landscape Designations

There are no landscape or townscape designations which apply to the site or its immediate setting.

St Benedicts Church, a Grade II* Listed Building, is the only designated feature on or adjacent to the site. There are very few designated features in proximity to the site (the nearest Conservation Areas are in Manchester City Centre (over 1 km to the west) and Gore Brook (approximately 1.5 km to the south east)). There is no intervisibility between these areas and the site due to intervening built form and topography. The only other designated features in proximity to the site are a group of Listed Buildings at the former Ellen Wilkinson High School (now part of The Manchester College) on Hyde Road, approximately 600 m west, though again, the site is visually separated by an intervening industrial estate, a viaduct and a bus depot.

8.3.6. Visual Baseline

Seven receptor groups have been identified to form the basis of the visual impact assessment and have been agreed in consultation with the local planning authority. The receptor groups are illustrated on Figure 8.2 Aerial Photograph and Key Receptors. Receptor groups comprise residential and commercial buildings, areas of open space, and / or streets which will experience similar views of the proposed development. The key receptors to be assessed were selected to provide a range of receptor types and sensitivities and from a variety of locations to explore a range of effects. Receptors groups include:

- Groups 1, 3, 5 and 7 are representative of views from areas of retained housing, or housing currently under construction, including flats, within the red line boundary (all are residential receptors);

- Group 2 is representative of views from the key transport corridor (A57) Hyde Road, a linear receptor and adjacent commercial receptors on Hyde Road;
- Group 4 is representative of views from Manchester Climbing Centre (Listed Building) at St Benedict's former Monastery, an area of public open space and retained housing in that area (residential receptors); and
- Group 6 is representative of industrial / commercial / municipal receptors adjacent to the site.

Summary baseline descriptions of visual amenity relating to each receptor group are provided below with reference to site photography provided in Figures 8.3-8.10.

Receptor Group 1 (existing residential receptors – See site photographs 1, 2 and 4)

This receptor group comprises a small area of suburban style, residential housing between Bennett Street and the Manchester to Hadfield / Glossop railway, east of the Olympic Freight Terminal and west of derelict land within the site between Matthews Street and Wigley Street in the north of the study area.

The majority of views from residential receptors are limited to other properties within the receptor group which, together with the high boundary walls of adjacent land uses to the north and east, restrict outward looking views to a considerable degree. As such, views of the site are limited to a small number of properties on the southern, western and eastern periphery of the receptor group and in many cases views towards the site are oblique in nature or from upper floors (i.e. not primary views).

In general terms, the site has a detrimental effect on visual amenity in views from this receptor group, due to the derelict character of adjacent land to the east (between Matthew Street and Wigley Street) with Vaughan Industrial Estate beyond, the disused and industrial character of the Olympic Freight Terminal (immediately west), and the low quality townscape setting of the1960-1970s social housing estate, including the two tower blocks, seen beyond housing to the south. However, views south do also include St Benedicts church (now Manchester Climbing Centre), which is positive townscape element and local landmark building.

Visual Sensitivity:	**High**, due to proprietary nature and close proximity of views.

Receptor Group 2 (Road users and Commercial Receptors – See site photograph 15)

This receptor group is linear in nature and comprises road users and pedestrians on Hyde Road, and also includes commercial buildings on southern side of the Hyde Road.

Due to the nature of receptors on Hyde Road the majority of views of the site are glimpsed and oblique in nature. The site is seen in close proximity to the north however, a combination of mature vegetation along the northern side of the road, and buildings along the southern edge of the site (including housing, construction hoardings, a car sales yard, and semi-derelict commercial/industrial units (on Clowes Street) restrict views into the site, though high rise tower blocks and Fujitsu tower are seen on the skyline beyond.

Occasional mature tree planting along the northern side of the road offers some visual amenity, but in general the site has little positive influence. The visual amenity of receptors on Hyde Road is detrimentally affected by high levels of traffic and by the dilapidated commercial and disused industrial character of Hyde Road, which forms the focus of the view.

Visual Sensitivity:	**Low,** due to the transient nature of receptors and focus of existing view (i.e. the road corridor).

Receptor Group 3 (existing and potential residential receptors, and educational receptor – See site photographs 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7)

This receptor group comprises areas of housing currently under construction between Clowes Street and Reabrook Avenue, existing housing between Bennett Street and Rostron Avenue, and Armitage Primary School.

This receptor group is located within the site boundary and buildings within this area will be retained as part of the development. Much of the area is currently under construction and as such, construction activity has formed part of the visual context of this receptor group for a period of time.

The receptor group comprises a number of interlinked residential streets and due to the pattern of development, the majority of residential properties are inward facing. As such primary views typically comprise other residential properties within the same street. Outward looking views are limited to those along streets and are often oblique in nature, or to a small number of properties on the edge of the receptor group. Outward looking views are generally enclosed by existing built elements and/or mature vegetation in the immediate townscape setting, including:

- The railway viaduct to the west;
- Warehousing and boundary walls at the Olympic Freight Terminal to the north west;
- Existing housing north of Bennett street to the north;
- Four storey residential development on Trowtree Avenue and Ashover Avenue to the east;
- Boundary walls to businesses on Clowes Street to the south east; and
- Mature trees along Hyde Road to the south of the School.

In general, visual amenity within the area is limited due to the enclosed, urban nature of views, low quality of surrounding townscape and proximity to major infrastructure (Hyde Road and railway).

Visual Sensitivity:	**High,** due to proprietary nature and close proximity of views.

Receptor Group 4 (existing residential receptors, recreational receptors – See site photographs 3, 8 and 9)

The receptor group comprises Manchester Climbing Centre (St Benedict's Church), sheltered housing (1 and 3 storey) and an area of public open space between St Benedict's Square and Kniveton Road.

This receptor group is located within the site boundary and buildings in this area will be retained as part of the development. Views from this receptor group are well enclosed by surrounding built development which restricts wider views into the site and the townscape setting. Views south are enclosed by two large tower blocks, located on slightly higher ground, which due to their scale, have an overbearing and dominant influence in views. To the west, the receptor group is enclosed by four storey, social estate housing on Trowtree Avenue which is of low quality and architectural appearance. To the east, the park provides a well vegetated, green setting for St Benedict's Church and residential property on Gregory Street and is a distinct feature within an area of otherwise intensely developed townscape. The park is enclosed by regional council offices to the east. To the north, the receptor is enclosed by Vaughan Industrial Estate for much of its length, except where adjacent to the vacant, semi-derelict site between Matthews Street and Wigley Street, which has a detrimental influence on the setting of the receptor and St Benedict's Church.

In general terms, the townscape setting of the receptor has a detrimental influence on visual amenity due to the dilapidated and low quality appearance of the surrounding townscape.

Visual Sensitivity:	Overall, **High**, due to the proprietary nature of views from residential receptors and recreational function of the park, although Manchester Climbing Centre is less sensitive.

Receptor Group 5 (existing and potential residential receptors – See site photographs 14, 15 and 16)

Mix of old terraced housing, 1960-70s terraced housing, and newly developed residential development (currently under construction) in south east of study area, immediately north of Hyde Road.

This receptor group is located within the site boundary and housing in this area will be retained as part of the development. Much of the area is currently under construction and as such, construction activity (including site compounds and temporary parking areas) has formed part of the visual context of this receptor group for a period of time.

Due to the pattern of development, the majority of residential properties are inward facing, and as such primary views comprise other residential properties within the same street. A limited number of properties at the northern edge of the estate front onto Clowes Street where views include low quality housing, a derelict pub, and the service yard to the rear of the shopping precinct.

To the east, the receptor group backs onto the landscape buffer which screens views of traffic on Pottery Lane. To the south, housing is currently under construction but will face directly on to Hyde Road, with secondary views over an area of unmanaged, rough ground to the north. Older terraced housing at the western end of the receptor group are also inward looking, though are separated from adjacent housing areas by incidental open space with occasional mature trees. In general, views from the receptor group are of existing urban development or construction sites.

Visual Sensitivity:	**High,** due to proprietary nature and close proximity of views.

Receptor Group 6 (Commercial and industrial receptors – See site photographs 1, 3, 9, 10 and 13)

This receptor group comprises a large area of traditional warehousing, industrial buildings and more modern offices within car parking at Vaughan Industrial Estate also including regional council offices on the former Fujitsu site.

The majority of receptors have limited or no view of the site due to high boundary walling around individual industrial/commercial premises, a lack of windows, and/or intervening buildings which restrict outwards looking views. The receptor group is located immediately north of the site and as such, the site forms the immediate townscape setting and the focus of views where views are available. The regional council offices front onto Wenlock Way and Kniveton Road and the site provides the focus of views to the south and west. Receptors with views of the site also include those on Bennett Street where the existing park provides a positive townscape setting. Views of receptors on Matthew Street face an area of derelict land which has a detrimental effect on visual amenity.

Visual Sensitivity:	**Low,** due to the nature of receptors and focus/character of existing view.

Receptor Group 7 (potential residential receptors – See site photographs 11 and 13)

This receptor group comprises two-three blocks of contemporary, four storey apartments (currently under construction) to the north and south of the junction between Pottery Lane and Wenlock Street, immediately east of the site.

These areas of new housing are located immediately east of the site and, once complete, will provide slightly elevated views of the site to the west and south from upper floors, as well as views along Wenlock Way and Lilford Close from ground level.

In general terms, the existing townscape setting affords little visual amenity for receptors due to the semi-derelict character of adjacent former warehousing (enclosed by pre-fabricated concrete fencing) and the dilapidated appearance of existing housing stock and public realm along Wenlock Way, both within the site to the west. Furthermore, the proximity of receptors to Pottery Lane means that views east will be dominated by the existing dual carriageway. Construction activity is also a feature of the existing view, including temporary car parking on Clowes Street. Views south along the landscape buffer between the site and Pottery Lane provide some, albeit limited amenity value in terms of screening traffic.

Visual Sensitivity:	**High,** due to proprietary nature and close proximity of views.

8.4. Identification of Effects

A description of the development and the parameters for the assessment are provided in Chapter 2 Scheme Description and are as shown on Figure 2.1 Development Parameters, Figure 2.2 Phasing Principles, and Figure 2.3 Indicative Masterplan. Further details of the design are provided in the Design and Access Statement, which accompanies the outline planning application.

Due to the outline nature of the application and indicative nature of the masterplan, full design details are not available at this stage of the project development. Therefore, the following design assumptions have been developed, in consultation with the design team, to provide a basis for the assessment:

- The majority of new development on site (approximately 80%) will be 2 storey housing, comprising a mix of terraced and semi-detached homes. There will also be a proportion of 3 storey (including some detached) housing (6%) and 4 storey apartments in key locations within the development;

- Overall, there will be a net increase in the number of homes on site (up to 126);
- The Community Hub will comprise a range of new community facilities, though specific building uses have not been identified at this stage, and will be located at a key gateway into the site;
- Proposed areas of public open space will provide a mix of formal and informal opportunities for recreation. Although the specific uses of open spaces are not prescribed at this stage, it is assumed that they will include formal sports facilities, play areas, informal open spaces, a walking route, and areas managed for wildlife benefit;
- Provision has been made to incorporate sustainable drainage features within areas of open space and the creation of a swale as an integral part of the streetscape of Wenlock Way;
- The majority of existing trees will be retained where located within areas of open space, (either retained or created as part of the development) including:
    - The belt of mature trees along the eastern boundary of the site, adjacent to Pottery Lane;
    - Groups of mature trees along the southern boundary of the site adjacent to Hyde Road; and
    - Mature trees within the area of existing public open space at the centre of the site;
- Where existing trees will be removed to make way for the development (inevitable for a scheme of this type) proposed tree planting is proposed within new areas of open space and along key streets. Although landscape proposals are only shown indicatively on the masterplan, the spatial arrangement of the development creates sufficient space for planting to compensate for the proposed level of tree loss through new planting;
- The masterplan has been designed to increase permeability and connectivity within the site (through reduction in the number of cul-de-sacs and a number of new internal roads to reduce the number of ‘dead ends’) and between the site and the surrounding townscape context/transport network (through improved pedestrian and vehicular connections with Hyde Road); and
- In general terms, the development has been designed to increase the sense of safety and security within the site through removal of dead ends, alleyways, and enclosed space, and replacement with a series of connected streets of open character, with appropriately designed open space at the core of the development, to reduce opportunities for antisocial behaviour through improved natural surveillance.

8.4.1. Potential Effects - Construction Phase

Full details of construction are not available at this stage so have not been considered in detail as part of this assessment. However, assumptions have been made in relation to the types of activities which are likely to take place during construction of the development.

Construction activities may affect the character and visual amenity of the study area, by intruding into existing views experienced by day to day users of the study area, including local residents, recreational users, road users and workers employed by local industry. The construction of the site will be undertaken in three phases, over a period of approximately 11 years and as such the duration of construction activity, although temporary, may extend beyond the short term. It is assumed that there would be no or very limited night time working. Typical activities with potential to affect visual amenity by creating views, changing the character of a view, or by causing direct visual intrusion include:

- Site clearance and demolition works;
- Erection of at least one construction compound somewhere within the site comprising temporary buildings, material storage areas and car parking;
- Use of cranes;
- Introduction of haulage and construction vehicles within the site, including large scale machinery and heavy plant;
- Excavation, earth moving, soil stripping and temporary storage of excavated materials within the site;
- Erection of security fencing/hoardings at the perimeter of construction areas; and
- Night time lighting and the potential for some working outside of normal working hours.

8.4.2. Potential Effects - Occupation Phase

The redevelopment of West Gorton is proposed as part of wider regeneration proposals within East Manchester. The regeneration of East Manchester is a key objective of existing and emerging planning policy within the city and, due to the dilapidated state of the urban environment within the study area, the proposed redevelopment of the site at West Gorton is an integral part of that strategy. The townscape of the site has degraded substantially over time and the character of the urban environment is of **low** townscape value and **poor** scenic quality.

Development of the masterplan for the site has been undertaken in consultation with local stakeholders and MCC (See Chapter 2 Scheme Description) over a number of years to develop an appropriate design for the successful redevelopment of the site. The masterplan accompanying this environmental statement provides a framework to enable regeneration of the site in accordance with planning policy and recognised urban design principles.

As such, the redevelopment of the site has potential to significantly enhance both townscape character and visual amenity. Potential effects are summarised below:

- Beneficial effects to townscape character resulting from the demolition of existing low quality townscape elements and creation of a new, high quality urban environment;
- Beneficial effects on both townscape character and visual amenity associated with the redevelopment of vacant or semi-derelict land within the site;
- Beneficial effects to visual amenity within the site, and in views of the site, through enhancement in townscape character, architectural built form and streetscape (the character of the existing townscape is of 'Poor' scenic value);
- Beneficial effects to townscape character through enhancement of the public realm, and increased opportunities for recreation;
- Beneficial effects associated with enhancements to the appearance of individual streets, connectivity between streets and legibility throughout the site;
- Beneficial effects to townscape character through improvements to the perception of safety and security;
- Beneficial effects on the setting of the Listed Building within the site (Manchester Climbing Centre, formerly St Benedict's Church);
- Beneficial effects to townscape character through enhancement s to community facilities; and
- Beneficial effects on character through increased connectivity between the site and surrounding townscape.

There is also some potential, albeit limited, for adverse effects including:

- Adverse effects to townscape character through an increase in the sense of enclosure within the site due to the increase in built footprint;
- Adverse townscape and visual effects due to increase in visual enclosure of existing homes retained within the development boundary; and
- Adverse effects on townscape character associated with the removal of existing trees and vegetation.

8.5. Mitigation

8.6.1. Construction Phase

Mitigation opportunities during the construction phase of works will primarily relate to measures identified in an Environmental Management Plan (EMP), which will be developed prior to construction commencing on any plot that is subject to a reserved matters planning application. This will seek to stipulate measures to avoid, reduce or offset environmental impacts of the construction works, including those related to townscape and visual amenity.

The potential effects identified during construction will be temporary and short term in comparison with the impact of the completed development. However they need to be addressed in order to minimise adverse impacts on receptors and as such a number of measures are proposed to minimise potential construction phase impacts, including:

- Considered siting of temporary installations such as site compound and material storage areas to avoid direct impacts in views from sensitive receptors;

- Considered timing of the works to minimise requirement for night time / weekend working and lighting and to minimise disruption caused by construction period;
- Erection of hoardings where appropriate to screen close proximity views of construction operations;
- Consideration of cut fill balance at detailed design stage, to avoid the need to transport material offsite and reduce the amount of traffic and number of journeys as well as reducing the amount of earth movement and ground modelling, where possible;
- Protection of existing areas of vegetation to be retained, with temporary protective fencing in accordance with the relevant British Standard.
- Limitations to working hours and the use of night time lighting, which should be kept to a minimum;
- Phased construction of the development to limit intensity of construction activity on receptors within the site, though this should be balanced against excessively prolonged effects where possible.

8.6.2. Occupation Phase

The Indicative Masterplan (Figure 2.3) has been designed to enhance, and where appropriate respond to townscape character within the site. The purpose of the proposal is to create a new, high quality urban environment to replace the existing degraded townscape. As such, at a broad level, the scheme proposed is an enhancement to townscape character and as such mitigation is an integral part of the masterplan design. The majority of the enhancements proposed to urban environment (townscape) will also have a beneficial effect on visual amenity for receptors within the site and its immediate townscape setting and as such, little 'secondary' mitigation (i.e. direct replacement of existing features or compensation through additional enhancement measures) is deemed necessary. However, it is worth noting that the masterplan incorporates a number of landscape mitigation measures which, as an integral part of the design, seek to minimise the potential for adverse effects. Measures include:

- Design of built form of appropriate height, scale, massing and density of to fulfil requirements for the site and complement the existing townscape character and pattern of development;
- Rationalisation of public open space within the site to provide a more formal and accessible recreational green space at the core of the development, which provides opportunities for compensation and enhancement through tree planting;
- Replacement and new native tree and shrub planting at the boundaries of the site, to reinforce existing planting and provide a higher degree of separation between the site and adjacent transport corridors (rail and road) and enhance biodiversity;
- Avenue tree planting within wide verges/swales (incorporating sustainable drainage) in key streets to help soften the built character of the site and provide amenity within the streetscape, as well as improving legibility through a clear hierarchy of streets.

8.6. Residual Effects

8.6.1. Townscape Effects

8.6.2.1. Occupation Phase

As outlined in the sections on potential effects (8.4.2) and mitigation (8.5.2), the proposals will provide a long term enhancement to townscape character at a site level through replacement of existing degraded townscape with a high quality, modern residential development of appropriate scale, massing and density. This beneficial effect will also extend to the surrounding townscape to a degree, although the influence of the redevelopment will be limited to the immediate context due to a lack of intervisibility between the site and the wider townscape setting.

The effects of redevelopment will provide long term benefits to townscape within the study area through replacement of the existing, degraded/semi-derelict built form and public realm within the site, with a high quality urban development. Green space within the site will be enhanced through rationalisation, enhancement (through creation of formal recreational facilities and tree planting), and expansion at the core of the site.

As is typical for a re-development of this type, some tree removal will be required. However, the majority of existing trees will be retained within areas of open space. Furthermore, sufficient space is provided for replacement tree planting within the site and at

the site boundaries which would more than replace that removed, and will be located to enhance the appearance of the new development as well as the setting of existing, retained housing within and adjacent to the site.

The combination of the extension and enhancement of the existing park, redevelopment of derelict site between Matthews Street and Wigley Street, and replacement of existing 1960-70s social housing estates with high quality modern housing development, will have a positive effect on the setting of the Listed Building at Manchester Climbing Centre (formerly St Benedict's Church). In addition, the removal of two high rise tower blocks will reduce the number of competing vertical elements on the skyline, reinforcing the importance of the church tower/spire as a local landmark.

In summary, the beneficial effects on townscape character are as follows:

- Enhancement of townscape character resulting from the demolition of existing low quality townscape elements, including 1960-70s social housing, two high rise tower blocks and disused/dilapidated warehousing, and creation of a new, high quality urban environment (the existing character is of 'Low' townscape value);
- Enhancement in townscape character, architectural built form and streetscape (the character of the existing townscape is of 'Poor' scenic quality);
- Enhancements from the redevelopment of vacant or semi-derelict land and disused residential, industrial and commercial buildings within the site, including high rise tower blocks which are prominent, detracting elements within the site and the local context;
- Enhancement of the public realm, including rationalisation, extension and creation of new areas of public open space, green space and opportunities for both formal and informal recreation;
- Enhancements to individual streets through improvements in architectural quality, creation of active built frontages and introduction of street trees (within swales and verges) in key areas to establish a coherent hierarchy of streets to improve legibility for local residents, pedestrians, cyclists and other people travelling around/through the site;
- Improvements to the perception of safety and security through replacement of the existing pattern of cul-de-sacs and alleyways with a system of connected streets to improve movement and permeability, improve quality of the public realm, and increase opportunities for natural surveillance;
- Enhancement to the setting of the Listed Building within the site (Manchester Climbing Centre, formerly St Benedict's Church) through redevelopment of the existing, degraded townscape and replacement with high quality development, the enhancement and extension of the existing park, and the removal of competing elements on the skyline: two high rise tower blocks;
- Demolition of the existing shopping precinct and creation of a new community hub to replace it, in a more appropriate (and potentially more economically viable) location;
- Enhancement of the character of the A57, Hyde Road, through development of vacant sites, redevelopment of existing, disused commercial buildings (on Clowes St) and creation of an appropriate, built edge to the street (road corridor); and
- Retention and enhancement of existing trees and vegetation along the southern and western site boundaries to retain a sense of separation between the site and the A57 and A6010, and creation of a new landscape and ecological buffer between the site and the railway to the west.

Sensitivity:	Due to the degraded and semi-derelict character of the site the scenic quality of the townscape resource is poor, and the townscape value is low. As such, the townscape is capable of accommodating significant change of the type proposed and sensitivity to change is **low**.
Magnitude:	The magnitude of the change is **High** due to the extent and comprehensive nature of the redevelopment proposals which are in accordance with national and local policy objectives for regeneration.
Significance:	Overall, the proposals will have a **Moderate Beneficial** and significant impact on townscape character.

8.6.2. Visual Effects

8.6.2.1. Construction Phase

The construction impacts of the scheme will be temporary in nature and the mitigation measures proposed will help to reduce potential impacts in views and upon visual amenity, particularly in relation to close proximity receptors who will be most sensitive to a change of the type proposed. Overall, the scale of the development is such that there will be some temporary adverse visual impacts associated with construction activity on site, particularly where it is in close proximity to adjacent receptors. However, the combination of mitigation measures, such as the erection of hoardings, limited working hours, phased development and considered siting of temporary installations / structures such as site compounds and temporary car parking, will help to reduce adverse visual effects. The residual effects on visual amenity during construction are set out below.

There will be some adverse effects where construction activity is clearly visible in close proximity to residential properties (receptor groups 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7). However, in the majority of areas, effects will be limited to a small number of outward looking properties at the edge of receptor groups, and the majority of receptors will not be significantly affected due to a lack of intervisibility. Construction activity is already part of the townscape setting in views from a number of receptors (3, 5 and 7), and all cases, visual amenity is already detrimentally affected by the low quality, degraded character of the existing built environment, and/or derelict nature of vacant sites. As such, the character and context of existing views will limit the magnitude of change experienced by receptors, where views are affected.

The duration of effects on residential receptors varies throughout the site according to the number of phases of development visible. Where the same receptors (within receptor groups) experience adverse effects over all three phases of the development, the effects of construction are more significant due to the duration of the effect. Construction activity will be visible from the following residential receptors during the following phases:

- Receptor group 1: Limited, glimpsed, mainly oblique views of small part of phase 2 to the south east, from eastern and southern edge of receptor group; clear views of phase 3 to east from eastern edge of receptor group only; limited, glimpsed mainly upper floor views of phase 3 to the west, from western edge of receptor group only;
- Receptor group 3: Clear views of phase 1 to the east and south east, from the eastern edges of the receptor group; clear views of small part of phase 2 to the north east, from north eastern edge of receptor group (majority of construction activity at phase 2 screened by new development from phase 1); clear view of phase 3 to the north west, from north western edge of receptor group;
- Receptor group 4: Clear views of phase 1 to the south, from southern edge of receptor group; clear views of phase 2 to the west, from western edge of receptor group;
- Receptor group 5: Views of phase 1 to the west, east and south from upper floors at side or rear of properties on western, eastern and southern edge of receptor group, many views also oblique; views of phase 2 clearly visible to north from small number of properties on northern edge of receptor group, and in upper floor views from rear of properties at western edge of receptor group; phase three screened by development at phase 2; and
- Receptor group 7: Views of phase 1 limited to small number of properties on southern edge of receptor group, though many views from elevated position; views of phase 2 clearly visible from south western edge of receptor group (elevated) and seen in oblique views from elevated receptors further north; Phase 3 clearly visible in mainly elevated views west from western edge of receptor group.

Enhancement works within Kniveton Community Park (phase 2), north of Ansdale Street (Phase 2), and within the landscape buffer along Hyde Road (Phase 3) will have some adverse effect on residential receptors, though effects are likely to be limited due to the short term, small scale and low intensity nature of construction activity.

Overall, only residential receptor group 7 will experience a significant adverse effect during construction, due to the elevated nature of the majority of views, and the duration of the effect on the same receptors within the group.

Views from recreational receptors (users of the Climbing Centre and Kniveton Community Park) within receptor group 4 will not be significantly affected during construction due to the limited sensitivity of receptors and low magnitude of change. Although receptors will have clear views of construction activity to the north and south (including small sections of phases 1, 2 and 3),

visual amenity is already detrimentally affected by the townscape setting which includes the two tower blocks and an area of vacant / semi-derelict land. Enhancement works within the public park (phase 2) will have some adverse effect on recreational receptors, though effects are likely to be limited due to the short term, small scale and low intensity nature of construction activity in this area. Effects will also be limited due to the small extent of the site visible, though due to the phasing of works, construction activity will be visible in different directions, over a long period.

Where located in close proximity to commercial receptors (receptor groups 2 and 6), construction activity will be visible from industrial and commercial receptors during phases 2 and 3. Effects to visual amenity will be limited to a small number of industrial properties at the very edge of Vaughan Industrial Estate and regional council offices at the former Fujitsu site. Where visible, construction will have a limited effect due to the commercial nature and therefore low sensitivity of receptors, and the character and context of existing views which comprise a mixture of degraded townscape and derelict, vacant sites, including land between Matthews Street and Widgley Street, which have a detrimental influence on amenity. Although adverse, effects will not be significant.

Views from road users on Hyde Road will mainly be limited to glimpsed, oblique views from moving vehicles and as such are of low sensitivity. Views of construction activity will be limited to works on the southern edge of the development (primarily phase 1 but also a small amount of phase 2) and will have little effect on amenity, due to the low scenic value of existing views and therefore, low magnitude of change. Although adverse, effects will not be significant. Table 8.3 provides a summary of visual effects during construction.

Table 8.3 Visual Effects During Construction

Receptor Group	Sensitivity to Change	Magnitude	Significance of Effect During Construction
1: Existing residential receptors	High	Low-Negligible	Minor Adverse
2: Road users and commercial receptors	Low	Low-Negligible	Negligible
3: Existing and potential residential receptors, and educational receptor	High	Low	Moderate-Minor Adverse
4: Existing residential receptors, recreational receptors	High	Low-Negligible	Minor Adverse
5: Existing and potential residential receptors	High	Low	Moderate-Minor Adverse
6: Commercial and industrial receptors	Low	Low-Negligible	Negligible
7: Potential residential receptors	High	Medium - Low	Moderate Adverse

8.6.2.2. Occupation Phase

In general terms, during the occupational phase, the enhancement to townscape character will have a beneficial effect on visual amenity throughout the site. All receptor groups identified will experience beneficial effects due primarily to improvements in views from receptors at the edge of receptor groups. In some cases, this will, to a small degree, be balanced by increased levels of visual enclosure or loss of an existing open/green setting in a small number of isolated areas. The residual effects on visual amenity are set out below.

Residential receptors (receptor groups 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7) will generally experience a visual benefit due to enhancements to the townscape setting. Proposed, high quality development will replace existing, degraded townscape in views from residential properties on the edge of receptor groups. Enhancements to the townscape setting and therefore visual amenity will include redevelopment of:

- 1960-70s social, estate housing (including the disused shopping precinct) in views from receptor groups 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7;
- 1960-70s tower blocks and associated infrastructure including large retaining walls and car parking, in close proximity views from receptors 3 and 4;
- Derelict warehousing, and industrial buildings in views from receptor groups 1, 3 and 7 (the redevelopment of the existing container site being of particular benefit to adjacent receptors in the north west of the site (receptor groups 1 and 3));
- Vacant and/or semi-derelict sites/land in views from receptor groups 1, 4 and 5; and
- Disused commercial premises on Clowes Street, in views from receptor 3.

In addition, improvements to the existing public realm through tree planting and enhancement of streets, creation of open space and enhancement of the existing park and landscape buffers will provide further visual benefit. Beneficial effects will be most evident in views from receptors located at the edges of receptor groups, where the extent of proposed change will be most evident. Beneficial effects due to enhancement in townscape quality will be tempered, to a small degree, where receptors will be enclosed by new development, such as: a) east of receptor group 5 where existing properties will back onto new development; b) in the centre of receptor 5 where existing vegetation will be removed to make way for development; and, c) west of receptor 1 where a previously developed, but now vacant site will be redeveloped. In cases ‘b’ and ‘c’ the areas to be redeveloped are derelict in character and the benefits associated with redevelopment outweigh any detrimental effects in terms of increased enclosure. In case ‘a’ there will be some adverse effect due to the increase in visual enclosure. However in this direction, views are predominantly from upper floors at the rear, or to the side of properties, so are secondary in nature (and are therefore less sensitive). The visual setting of properties is primarily urban in other directions, so in general terms the proposals are in keeping with the existing context. In addition, views east are already substantially enclosed by dense planting within the landscape buffer and as such visual amenity will not be significantly, adversely affected. Furthermore, other receptors within group 5 will experience significant benefits in visual amenity due to enhancements to the surrounding townscape.

Receptor group 7, which will be significantly, adversely affected during construction phase, will experience significant beneficial effects in terms of visual amenity due to the redevelopment of existing, disused, semi-derelict warehousing to the west, and replacement of social, estate housing to the south west, particularly in views from ground floors. Due to the elevated nature of the majority of views, enhancements to townscape will be appreciable over a wide area which will also be of benefit in visual terms.

Overall, residential receptors will experience improvements in visual amenity, a number of which will be significant.

Recreational receptors (within receptor group 4) will experience beneficial effects as a result of the proposals through the enhancement to their townscape setting through redevelopment, and through extension of areas of open space and associated planting which will be of amenity value. As such, there will be a significant beneficial effect to visual amenity from recreational receptors.

The setting of commercial and industrial receptors (receptor groups 2 and 6) will also be enhanced through redevelopment of the vacant, semi-derelict land between Matthews Street and Wigley Street, extension of the existing park, redevelopment of disused commercial buildings on Clowes Street, and through redevelopment of the existing, degraded 1960-70s social, estate housing on Wenlock Way and north of Hyde Road. Due to the low sensitivity of receptors, although beneficial, visual effects will not be significant.

The visual character of Hyde Road will be enhanced as part of the proposals and the community Hub will form a new feature at the entrance to the site, in keeping with the commercial character of Hyde Road. The development and landscape enhancement of vacant sites and open land on the north side of Hyde Road, including disused commercial property on Clowes Street, will also provide a more appropriate edge to the development, which will be of visual benefit. Landscape enhancements within the road corridor will further enhance the visual amenity of road users, though due to the low sensitivity of receptors, beneficial effects will not be significant. Table 8.4 provides a summary of residual visual effects.

Table 8.4 Residual Visual Effects

Receptor Group	Sensitivity to Change	Magnitude	Significance of Effect During Construction
1	High	Medium	Moderate Beneficial
2	Low	Medium	Minor Beneficial
3	High	Medium - High	Moderate-Major Beneficial
4	High	Medium	Moderate Beneficial
5	High	Medium-Low	Moderate – Minor Beneficial
6	Low	Medium	Minor Beneficial
7	High	Medium - High	Moderate-Major Beneficial

8.6.3. Cumulative Effects

A list of all developments considered as part of the assessment of cumulative effects is provided in Chapter 14 Cumulative Effects. There are a number of committed developments within the wider townscape context of the site which have potential to enhance townscape character within East Manchester through redevelopment of degraded, or vacant areas of townscape when considered in combination. However, due to a lack of intervisibility between the townscape of the Study Area and the wider townscape context, only one scheme has potential to cumulatively affect the townscape character and visual amenity of the Study Area in combination with the development proposals under consideration: a commercial development (comprising two medium scale commercial buildings with associated car parking) on the south side of Hyde Road, opposite the site.

The proposed development at West Gorton will enhance the character and visual amenity of Hyde Road through development of vacant sites and creation of an appropriate, commercial and residential, built edge to the road corridor, separated where appropriate by existing and proposed tree planting within a landscape buffer. Development on the south side of the road will help to further enclose the road corridor and reduce the perceived width of the corridor, which would be of benefit to the character of the street. However, due to the relatively small scale of the proposal, although beneficial in nature, the cumulative effect on townscape character will not be significant.

In visual terms, the committed development on the south side of Hyde Road will have some cumulative benefit in views from receptor group 2 due to the redevelopment of a vacant site on a key transport route. However, due to the low sensitivity of the receptor and small scale of the additional change, the cumulative effect, although beneficial, would not be significant.

In addition to the potential for cumulative effects of the scheme in combination with other committed development, there is also potential for additional beneficial, cumulative effects on townscape character due to the positive effects of planting and increased green space on biodiversity (see ecological chapter) and in terms of cultural heritage, due to the positive effects on the character of the built environment and Manchester climbing centre (formerly St Benedict's Church) a Listed Building.

8.7. Conclusion

The assessment has demonstrated that the site is well contained by a combination of built development, transport infrastructure and vegetation within the site and the wider townscape and as such effects are limited to a localised area. Inherently, the proposals are an improvement to an area of degraded townscape, but specific measures are proposed to minimise potentially adverse townscape and visual effects In addition, landscape measures are proposed to provide further enhancement to townscape character, including the retention of existing mature trees within the site (where possible) and new planting to increase the level of vegetation within the site and help integrate the development within its wider setting.

During the construction stage there will be some adverse effects on visual amenity due to the introduction of further construction activity within the site. However, due to the low quality of the existing townscape, phased nature of the development, and presence of existing construction sites within the townscape setting, the magnitude of change will be limited for the majority of receptors and effects will not be significant. However, one receptor group (7) comprising two recently constructed residential apartment blocks, north east of the site, will experience a Moderate Adverse effect during construction, due to the elevated nature of views and the visibility of all three phases of construction, which will extend the duration of the effect. This effect cannot be mitigated due to the proximity of the receptor group to the site, but will be temporary in nature.

At occupation, the proposals will have a significant, residual beneficial impact (Moderate Beneficial) on the townscape character of the site and the immediate townscape setting within the study area, due to the removal of poor townscape and replacement with a new, high quality urban environment which will be a significant enhancement. In visual amenity terms, the enhancement in townscape character will have a beneficial effect on all receptor groups identified, and a significant beneficial impact on receptor groups 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 (Moderate Beneficial to Moderate-Major Beneficial impacts).

Overall, the proposals have been designed to enhance the character of an area of degraded townscape through redevelopment and creation of a high quality urban environment, in accordance with national and local planning policy aims and objectives. The townscape character and visual amenity of the site will improve significantly as a result of the proposed redevelopment.

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