

## **Employment Allocation - Clayton West – request to increase the size of allocation**

### **Introduction**

Smeeden Foreman was commissioned to carry out a Landscape Statement and this was submitted to set out landscape opportunities and constraints for development of land off Wakefield Road Clayton West. The site falls within Green Belt and the document set out to provide information about the condition of the existing landscape and to indicate whether development would be appropriate for the site

The site promoter has requested consideration be given to an increase in the size of the allocation so that it would include land further up the valley side to the northern extent. This extension would incorporate field's right up to the curtilage boundary of Gillcar Farm to the north of the site and include the large field up Kiln Lane right up to the access road to the farm.

### **Landscape Character**

The existing site is bisected by Wakefield Road, A636, and is bounded to the South by the River Dearne. The site lies on the boundary of the 2 within the National Character Areas [NCA] 37 and 38, and just within NCA 38: Nottingham, Derbyshire and Yorkshire Coalfield. Reference is made to a Landscape Character Assessment undertaken by the Denby Dale Parish Environment Trust but this was not seen or used for the statement.

Local Landscape Character: Assessing the local character overall as of medium sensitivity, the attributes considered in the Landscape Statement included:

- recognisable landscape structure,
- positive character,
- moderate condition,
- reasonable sense of place,
- visually notable,
- aesthetically satisfactory or uninspiring/some degree of detracting features,
- some features worthy of conservation

The statement acknowledges that the landscape surrounding the site is generally of a positive character, with features indicating both former and present mixed uses. It does report that “while much of the housing within Clayton West is located rising up the southern valley side, the urban areas appear conjoined with Scissett to the west and is seen as a linear settlement, with businesses and industry situated in the lower valley areas in proximity to Wakefield Road and the River Dearne. Future development for Employment would be more in keeping therefore if it is contained within the lower valley areas and adjacent to the river rather than extending to the upper valley sides and intruding further into the Green Belt.

The Landscape Statement goes on to state that “whilst it is acknowledged that the green field land to the periphery of Clayton West and other outlying settlements is of a positive character, development of the site would extend the urban form along Wakefield Road, continuing the linear form of the existing settlements along the valley and partially up the northern valley side. As such, development occurring within the site should be responsive

to scale and massing which would aim to replicate that existing within the settlement whereby larger buildings occupy lower areas and reduce with elevation". This recommendation, to replicate the existing within the settlement, demonstrates the alignment and extent of original site area to be developed would be more in – keeping and less detrimental to the positive character afforded to the site and the landscape surrounding the site at present.

Two Public Rights of Way (PROW) follow routes through the site from the western side of Gillcar Farm to Kiln Lane, and from Wakefield Road to the south connecting with the lane which leads to Clayton Hall Farm. The direct impact of development to these routes is clearly stated. Whilst reference is made in the Landscape Statement that there is potential to improve connectivity, or improve existing routes, it is acknowledged that users of the public footpaths will experience a change to the type of landscape through which they are moving; one of a rural nature to one of a developed nature. Restricting the development to the original alignment for employment (and keeping it largely to the area to the south of the existing PROW DEN 14/10) would reduce the extent of change and impact to the users of the footpaths.

The Landscape Statement states the development of the site may not be inappropriate subject to detailed consideration of scale and massing within the site. With regards wider views, reference is made to the green roof of buildings at Park Mill being discernible and that development of the site would comprise a perceivable increase in the built form within existing views. Careful siting, scale and material choices would be beneficial to lessen the appearance of development within the landscape. We agree with both of these statements but would suggest that these recommendations in themselves would be more appropriate to keeping the development within the lower valley sides and not developing the upper extents and certainly not extending so far up the valley as to meet the curtilage boundary enclosing the Gillcar Farm buildings. We consider that this will extend the built form way beyond that which could be accommodated within the extents defined in the vicinity such as demonstrated at the existing development at Park Mill to the south west.

The Landscape Statement confirms that Local Views are varied both with respect to the type of receptor, the nature of the existing views and the extent to which the site is visible. The report however states that views from Kiln Lane into or across the site for motorists are not available due to the enclosed nature of the road with tall hedges. Given the nature of the Employment Development and potential height, scale and massing, existing tall hedges would only limit or restrict views into the development. This would be further exacerbated by the development extending to the full extent being requested by the site promoter.

The Landscape Character Assessment carried out by the Kirklees Landscape Section assessed the site on the minimal allocation, which did not extend the development to the top of the site and Gillcar Farm.

It recognised that the site had been used for farming/quarrying in the past but no settlement within the original boundary area.

The visual character concentrated on the site being low lying and it concluded that the area is of good condition with well-maintained stone walling and hedgerows. The character was deemed weak due to the area mainly being large open fields used for agriculture resulting in the character matrix to strengthen the character of the site. It concluded that the use of local materials and retaining existing features could strengthen the character of the site. Sympathetic development including the road could help to give the site a cohesive feel and relationship to the existing village. We consider that extending the site to the much larger footprint, onto the higher ground would be more overbearing and out of scale with the local character. New development on this Green Belt site should it be developed, should be more in-keeping and sympathetic to the adjacent site to replicate scale and nature of development.

The Landscape Statement by Smeeden Foreman concludes that whilst the agricultural land of the site contributes to a wider landscape character that is positive in nature, its juxtaposition to the existing eastern edge of Clayton West, in particular large scale building within the valley floor, provides urban landscape pattern which would be extended along Wakefield Road, should the site be developed. This it is concluded would continue the linear form of the existing settlements along the lower valley reaches and partially up the northern valley side. This is where the development should be limited to, and not all the way up to the curtilage of Gillcar Farm. Development should be responsive to scale and massing to replicate that existing within the adjacent settlement, which only partway extends up the valley side to the north.

Whilst we agree that due to the screening effects of the existing topography, vegetation and built form within Clayton West, visibility of the site is afforded good screening and Employment development may not be seen as out of context from wider views and travellers along Wakefield Road.

## **Conclusion**

Kirklees Landscape Architects considers that the effect of extending the development beyond the original alignment, up onto the higher ground would have a greater adverse effect in terms of visual impact and change to character. The built form will be considerably more intrusive and the larger development will significantly increase the potential harm to the landscape.

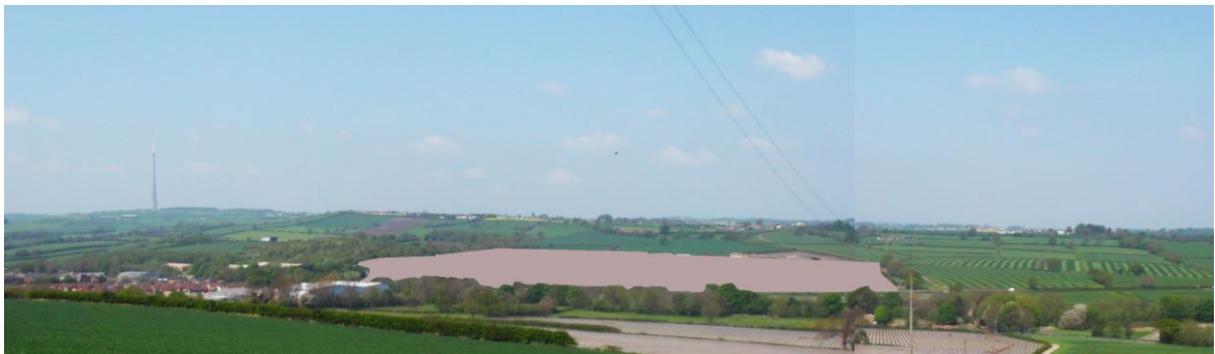
Whilst we agree that mitigative planting along the road and within the site can improve screening, we do conclude however that the impact of the built form, due to its very nature, will have a much greater magnitude if the extent of the development extends further up the valley side and therefore we recommend that extending the development area is refused on the higher ground.



Existing view from Kirklees way looking north



View from Kirklees way looking north of original development area



View from Kirklees way looking north of extended development area