



Residential development at Greenhill Bank Road

Visual Appraisal

20 July 2016

1. Introduction

- 1.1 It is proposed to construct 5 dwellings at a site along the eastern side of Greenhill Bank Road in New Mill. This report considers the visual impact of the development on the landscape and identifies measures to mitigate any potential negative effect.

2. Landscape Context

- 2.1 Kirklees Council produced a Landscape Assessment that identified nineteen differing landscape character areas, (LCA's,) each one being a unique combination of features that give rise to a particular landscape character. The site lies within LCA G1 – the Holme River Valley. This covers the settled valley of the river Holme, running south-eastwards from Huddersfield. It is described as *'a densely settled landscape, with numerous villages concentrated on the valley floor. These are characterised by rows of terraces facing the main road and extending up the valley sides'*. The valley bottom is generally home to busy roads and settlements with steep valley sides rising above. Woodland is frequent on very steep slopes. In the 18th and 19th centuries the textile industry flourished in the valley bottom leading to distinctive compact, gritstone settlements of mills, often with tall chimneys, workers housing and grand civic buildings. In more recent years this has been overlain with busy roads and many of the factories have been replaced with modern factory units or converted to residential use.
- 2.2 New Mill is a village typical of the LCA, sitting at the base of the valley of New Mill Dyke. The road network is particularly busy as the A635 and the A616 cross in the village centre. Moorbrook Mill near the centre has recently been demolished and replaced with new housing, whilst a mix of old and new industrial buildings of Glendale Mills occupies the valley bottom to the south of the new housing. The valley sides rise steeply above the buildings of the valley bottom, with roads and housing running along the hillsides. Woodland covers the steeper valley sides along the valley to the south, towards Jackson Bridge.
- 2.3 The site is part of the steep western valley side sandwiched between the new housing of Moorbrook Mill at its base and Greenhill Bank Road along its upper boundary. Houses run intermittently along the western, upper, side of Greenhill Bank Road towards the small village of Totties. The denser housing of the village centre abuts the site on its narrow northern boundary, on the lower side of Greenhill Bank Road. The site area is covered by scrub, occasional trees and overgrown grassland, with denser growth on the steeper parts towards the lower slopes. A stone wall typical of the village forms the Greenhill Bank Road boundary and a dilapidated drystone field wall forms the southern boundary. The newer stone-faced retaining walls of the new Moorbrook Mill development create the eastern boundary with the northern one being an incomplete mix of fencing and walls.
- 2.4 The landscape of New Mill is of reasonable quality imparted by its strong valley form overlain by a characteristic mix of gritstone mills and nineteenth century housing. However the newer industrial buildings bring a note of discord to the area, and the busy road network

with associated signage and lighting threaten to overwhelm the harmony of the older landscape structure.

3. The proposals

- 3.1 The proposals involve the construction of a row of 5 dwellings on the upper part of the site, along Greenhill Bank Road. Due to the steepness of the slope, and to avoid undue impact on the views from Greenhill Bank Road, the houses are set into the hillside facing directly east across the valley, with only a roofed parking area and access structure to the upper floors facing the road. This will allow views through the buildings to the eastern valley sides beyond. The main living accommodation is within a single storey set into the hillside with a largely glazed frontage to take advantage of views from the houses but also to minimise the effect of the new buildings from across valley views or views from the valley bottom.
- 3.2 See plans for detailed design of the building which are a unique style that will allow permeability will be combined with traditional materials to reference the local character. The stone wall along Greenhill Bank Road will be retained, or re-created.

4. Visibility

4.1 General

The proposals site is not highly visible due to the valley landform and conglomeration of buildings in the village centre and along the valley bottom. In addition it will not be of great prominence due to its small scale in relation to the Moorbrook Mill site adjacent and the rest of the New Mill settlement. Although in a relatively elevated position, it is usually seen against the hillside, woodland or hedges, or other buildings which further limits its effect on views.

Close views from Greenhill Bank Road, views from across the valley, from New Mills centre and from the south have been considered below. There will be few views from the north due to the arrangement of surrounding buildings in the village.

4.2 Views from Greenhill Bank Road

From the west visibility is limited to views from Greenhill Bank Road and properties immediately opposite the site. A tall conifer hedgerow prevents views from the southerly parts of Greenhill Bank Road, and similarly the terraced housing of New Mill at the lower, northern end of the road, so only when almost directly opposite will viewers obtain views of the development. Due to proximity the proposed buildings will have a strong effect on these views. The direct views across the valley will be compromised by the proposals but as the visible, upper, parts of the proposed dwellings will be permeable, a changing panorama through the buildings as the viewer travels along the road will be available. (See visualisation) This will compensate for loss of a wider, open view adding a unique foreground interest. Some of the trees and shrubs on site will be removed and their replacement with housing will effectively extend the extent of the current housing up the slope.

View 1. From Greenhill Bank Road south, looking north-east, over New Mill



View 2. From Greenhill Bank Road north, looking south-east.



4.3 Views from the south

From the south general topography and buildings prevent most views although there will be some glimpses from the footpath running upslope about 80m from the sites southern boundary. (This is a very underused and mostly overgrown footpath.) In these views the scrub vegetation will be replaced largely by rear gardens, with the houses forming a relatively small proportion of the view on the upper slopes. The gable end of the nearest proposed house will be of similar or lesser prominence to the existing houses of Moorfield estate at the base of the slope. Housing will be viewed against the backdrop of trees and hedgerows of the gardens on the western side of Greenhill Bank Road.

View 3. From upper footpath looking north



*View 4. From lower footpath looking north
(site indicated in red)*



4.4 Views from Moorbrook Mills housing estate.

Views of the proposals from the Moorbrook Mills housing will close ones. However, with the exception of houses backing directly onto the site, only glimpses of the site can be obtained from some properties and public areas of the estate. The proposed houses and gardens will occupy a large proportion of the views thus have an inherently strong effect. However the background trees will remain visible above the new houses which will mitigate their effect, as will the long rear gardens in the foreground of the view. The design of the houses, with a largely glass façade, facing the existing properties will have the effect of reducing the visual strength of the housing structures. The change from a view of a natural, green slope to one of houses with gardens will be negative but the current enclosed view is not one that is likely to be strongly valued by residents. This, combined with the proposed housing design, will render the scale of change only slightly negative.



*View 5. From between 70 and 78 Moorbrook Mill Drive
(Visible part of site indicated by red line)*

4.5 Views from New Mills centre

From the town centre only glimpses of the proposed housing will be seen above the Moorbrook Mills housing. They will be seen against a backdrop of hedges and woodland, and will not affect the wooded horizon above. The proposed houses will be of very little significance in the view, particularly in comparison with the prominence of the Moorbrook Mills housing below and closer to the viewer.

*View 6. From New Mill centre-(near Co-op)
(Site indicated in red)*



View 7. From New Mill centre-(near White Hart)



4.6 View from the A616, Glendale Mills entrance.

A view from the opposite valley side, the proposals site lies just above, and largely hidden by, the Millbrook Mills housing. Parts of the roof lines will be seen above the existing housing and some of the mid-slope trees and shrubs will be removed resulting in a slight increase in urban elements in the view. However the proposed housing will not affect the current wooded skyline and will be seen against the slope and below the woodland thus will be of very low significance in the view. The comparative dominance of the Millbrook Mill housing will further render its significance low.

View 8. From Glendale Mills/Target gym entrance

Conifer hedge to south of site

Extg houses to north of site



4.7 Views from the A616, south.

As the A616 rises southwards from the centre of New Mill it runs through or on the edge of a wooded slope resulting in few views of the proposals site. Within very occasional glimpses parts of the site will be seen on the opposite hillside over the factory units of the valley bottom. The proposals will result in a small increase in the urban elements of this view but are of a scale that will not affect the overall balance of woodland, houses and industry.

View 9. From A616, near bus stop.



4.8 Views from the footpath along the northern edge of Spring Wood.

A footpath runs directly upslope from the A616 on the opposite valley side to the proposals site. Users of the footpath will be sensitive to changes in the view as appreciation of the view is a large part of their reason for using it. Views of the site are obtained as part of a composite view over New Mill of old and new industrial building and housing. The site occupies only a small proportion of the view, less than closer viewpoints. (See Views 6, 7, 8) Thus, although the proposals would result in a small increase in urban elements, the dominance of other buildings and retention of the wooded skyline will render the difference created insignificant.

View 10. From footpath edge of Spring Wood.

(site indicated in red)



5. Summary and Conclusions

5.1 New Mill is a typical dense gritstone settlement arising from the textile industry located in the Holme Valley. The haphazard conglomeration of buildings, old and new housing and industrial buildings of the valley bottom gives rise to houses and roads running along the slopes then more open slopes above. The steepest slopes are heavily wooded. Although this is a distinctive landscape, the more recent industrial buildings and busy road network reduce the unity of the landscape character.

- 5.2 The scale of the proposals is very small in relation to the village and to the wider countryside beyond, as well as in relation to adjoining housing developments and industrial land uses.
- 5.3 The landscape is one that is enclosed by the valley landform, woodland and buildings. Generally, small scale development can be fitted into this landscape without detriment to the character, with existing features and structures providing substantial visual screening. The proposals site is directly adjacent to other housing, nestled below woodland on a valley side thus is not seen in isolation, nor against a contrasting land-use (such as open fields), nor is it visible on a skyline. House building along the roads, facing the valley bottom emulates the current settlement pattern. These factors combine to result in an intrinsically low level of impact on views and landscape character.
- 5.4 The visibility of the proposals site is generally very low. The main views affected will be close ones from Greenhill Bank Road above the site and from the Moorbrook Mill houses below. Due to their proximity in these views, the proposals will form a large part of the views thus will have a strong impact upon them. The nature of the effect will be slightly negative from Moorbrook Mill houses where an enclosed scrub slope will be replaced by gardens, then housing above. From Greenhill Bank Road the effect is potentially more negative as views over the valley will be affected.

Mitigation

- 5.5 The design and layout of the proposals minimises the effect on the landscape character and the close views most affected. From the bottom of the slope at Moorbrook Mills solid blocks of housing above could be overbearing. However the stepped nature of the design and the glazed façade will break up and diminish any solid features thus minimise the negative impact. The buildings will appear to 'nestle' into the slope rather than stand proud of it. To increase this effect, additional planting along the terraces of the houses, on the immediate slopes below and either side of the houses is recommended to create a series of stepped, green terraces. The setting of the buildings into the hillside and the distance from the viewer, across the garden, will together mitigate the potential negative effect.
- 5.6 Views over the valley from Greenhill Bank Road will be compromised to some extent by building housing on this site. However the availability of the views is limited by existing hedgerows. Also the steep valley sides mean that housing above the road is not likely to be affected. The proposed design, setting the main part of the houses below the road and building a high level of permeability into the upper part of the houses, will significantly mitigate the potential negative effect on these views. In order to create the visibility through the houses a unique building style is required. The proposed design will successfully achieve visual permeability, providing a focal interest to the view and creating a series of framed views. Although differing to the traditional building style of the locality, this will introduce a unique feature of visual interest. In order to reference the new design to the vernacular building style that is important in defining the character of this area it is recommended that materials are chosen that reflect the locality in the detailed design. For the same reason boundary walls should be retained or re-built in the same style as existing to anchor the new buildings into the surrounding townscape.

