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Ref; 22/1281/302 – Planning Statement

Planning Statement

Erection of two detached dwellings and associated access, parking and landscaping to previously developed site at former Wicken Hall Mill, Smithy Green, Newhey.

Section 1.0 - Introduction

1.1 JPE Consultancy Limited has prepared this Planning Statement on behalf of Leigh Kelly in support of a planning application for the erection of two detached dwellings with associated access, parking and landscaping and the remediation of a previously developed site.

1.2 The following information is submitted in support of the application:

Drawings

- 22/1281/100 – Location plan
- 22/1281/101 – Existing site plan
- 22/1281/201 – Proposed site plan
- 22/1281/202 – Plot 1 - Proposed floor plans
- 22/1281/203 – Plot 1 - Proposed elevations
- 22/1281/204 – Plot 2 - Proposed floor plans
- 22/1281/205 – Plot 2 - Proposed elevations
- 22/1281/206 – Landscaping design
- 22/1281/207 – Proposed street scene
- 090922 JC-01 - Topographical survey

Reports

- 22/1281/301 – Design & Access Statement
- 22/1281/302 – Planning Statement
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- 3865-01 - Phase 1 Geo Environmental Report (Rev A Nov 2022)_Part1
- 3865-01 - Phase 1 Geo Environmental Report (Rev A Nov 2022)_Part2
- PGC 642-C-001_P2 – Drainage Strategy Report
- Arboricultural Implications Assessment
- Arboricultural Method Statement

Supporting technical information

- EVCP – Rolek Wallpod EV
- Porchester Hood 15W – LED Bulkhead
- Saxby Odyssey Wall Mounted Downlight – WMDL
- Westminster 10W – v20 External Lighting Bollard

1.3 Photographs of the existing site are included at appendix 1.

Section 2.0 – Site context

- 2.1 The application site was part of the former Wicken Hall Mill comprising the subject land and a larger area directly to the south and to the opposite side of a road that has been redeveloped for housing (1-4 Carp View – planning consent ref; 13/00323). The majority of the Wicken Hall Mill buildings were cleared to slab level in or around 2005.
- 2.2 The site is located to the east of the A640 Huddersfield Road to the existing settlement at Smithy Green with the main grouping of buildings comprising a stone built terrace (1-6 Smithy Green), and a modern development of four detached houses (1-4 Carp View).



Image 1 - Subject site in relation to road and Carp View development

- 2.3 The Smithy Green settlement is located to the bottom of a valley with steep wooded slope up to the A640 Huddersfield Road to the west, and steep wooded slope up to the west with Wickenhall Farm and Wicken Hall House located beyond this to the elevated part of the valley.
- 2.4 The subject site is generally level and broadly square in shape with a rubble surface from the clearance of the mill buildings, remnants of the mill development and a number of cabins, stored materials and compound utilised by the site owner.
- 2.5 Remnants of the former mill use remain with the rubble surface to the land that extends to Wicken Hall Clough to the north, brick buildings to north boundary, brick retaining walls to the embankment to the west, brick retaining walls to the embankment to the north, and the housing for the three phase electrical supply to the former mill buildings (now disconnected).
- 2.6 The site has been upfilled with the rubble from the Mill buildings and the foundations and slabs to the Mill buildings are in place below the rubble fill.
- 2.7 To the south of the Carp View development are the two former mill lodges that previously served Wicken Hall Mill. These lodges are set at a higher level than

Carp View and the watercourse from the lodges discharges to a steeply falling weir and then passes through a culvert that is constructed under Carp View, the road and the subject site before emerging directly to the north of the subject site and discharging to Wicken Hall Clough.

- 2.8 The site fronts Lane Bottom to the west with a retaining wall forming a cut out parking area (7 parking spaces) that the land owner has formed for residents at Smithy Green terrace as part of the development proposals.
- 2.9 Lane Bottom connects the Smithy Green settlement with further development to the north comprising a stone built terrace (31-37 Pioneers Villas), the Bulls Head Public House and a large commercial premises (P W Greenhalgh at Ogden mill).
- 2.10 Directly opposite (west) is 1-6 Smithy Green a terrace of stone built properties with pitched slate roofs.
- 2.11 To the south there is a modern development of dwelling houses of two and three storey height and the access route continues to the east of that development upto Wicken Hall and Wicken Hall Farm.
- 2.12 Beyond the north boundary of the subject site the land grades down steeply to Wicken Hall Clough.
- 2.13 The landowner acquired the wider Wicken Hall Mill site in the latter part of 2012. At that time severe issues were being encountered to both the subject site and Lane Bottom from significant volumes of surface water run off due to the existing culvert being collapsed and blocked. The landowner undertook significant engineering works to replace a 100metre length of the culvert to both the south parcel of the mill site and the subject site. This resolved the surface water flooding resulting from the blocked culvert and provided a significant improvement for the residents of Smithy Green and for residents as far along Lane Bottom as Pioneers Villas and The Bulls Head Pub.

Section 3.0 – Proposed development

- 3.1 The proposal is to construct two detached dwellings fronting Lane Bottom with associated access, gardens and landscaping.
- 3.2 The dwellings would have a modest footprint in relation to the overall plot (the proposed building footprint is 19% of the available land area). When Wicken Hall Print Works were present historical mapping indicates that the entire site was covered with buildings/structures. The proposed buildings would be a significant reduction in the built form that had existed to this site over a long period (and upto 2005) and were an established part of the Smithy Green settlement.
- 3.3 Low rise housing is proposed with two storeys of accommodation of a similar form to Smithy Terrace that is opposite and of a lower height than the houses directly to the south at Carp View (3 storeys of development).
- 3.4 Landscaped gardens are provided to the rear of each dwelling with further landscaping to the perimeter of the site. To the north and east boundaries there are mature trees that provide robust and effective screening of views in and out of the site. The existing trees are to be retained and further supplemented with the planting of native species to provide screening.
- 3.5 The landscaping will perform an important function in;
 - further strengthening the boundary screening.
 - Providing an opportunity to improve biodiversity.
 - Providing a clear distinction between the extent of formal residential garden areas, and the undeveloped green space located beyond the established and clearly defined curtilage of the former Mill site.
- 3.6 Secure cycle storage and an Electric Vehicle Charging Point (EVCH) are provided to each dwelling to promote sustainable forms of transport.
- 3.7 The site is in a sustainable location, within the Smithy Green settlement. Existing infrastructure is available to facilitate development and local shops and services are available in Newhey village centre.
- 3.8 Further improvements are proposed to land drainage and to alleviate overland surface water flows. There is still a constant flow of surface water run off from the west side of the steeply graded valley that collects and flows to the elevated access to the east side of Carp View. This results in surface water run off that is directed to Lane Bottom and results in a significant volume of over land surface water during heavy and prolonged rainfall. The installation of land drains is proposed in the drainage strategy to collect overland surface water flows. This will alleviate the resulting impact to Lane Bottom and direct the surface water to Wicken Hall Clough.
- 3.9 As part of the development proposals resurfacing is proposed to Lane Bottom to the length of road fronting the subject site. The surface to this length of road was in a very poor condition being heavily holed and uneven and proving difficult for existing residents to manoeuvre. The landowner of the subject site has resurfaced this length of access over recent months with a base course of tarmac and is proposing to install drainage and a top coat of tarmac as part of the development proposals that will improve the access and benefit existing residents.

- 3.10 As part of the redevelopment of the land a parking area has been formed for the residents of 4-6 Smithy Green. Available space for parking is very limited and provision of these spaces will be of benefit to these residents.

Section 4.0 – Planning policy

The Development Plan for Rochdale comprises the Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy 2016 (CS) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchases Act (2004) identifies that applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The development must therefore be assessed against national planning policy contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) together with the local policies set out in the Rochdale Local Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

- 4.1 The NPPF is an important material consideration in determining planning applications emphasising a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and requiring that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay (paragraph 11).
- 4.2 Paragraph 60 confirms the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes and identifies the importance of a sufficient amount and variety of land coming forward where it is needed.
- 4.3 Chapter 12 of the NPPF focusses on 'Achieving Well Designed Places'.
- 4.4 Paragraph 130 states that planning decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the quality of the area; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.
- 4.5 Chapter 13 sets out policies for 'Protecting Green Belt land' (Paragraphs 137 – 151) and confirms that Green Belt serves the following five purposes:
- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
 - to assist in safeguarding the countryside from further encroachment;
 - to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
 - to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 4.6 Paragraph 147 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 4.7 Paragraph 149 states that a Local Planning Authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, exceptions to this include;
- e) limited infilling in villages;

g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land; whether redundant or in continuing use, and which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.

4.8 Paragraph 174 requires planning decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by, a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, and d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.

4.9 Part 16 of the NPFF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

The Local Development Plan

The relevant local planning policies are the Rochdale Core Strategy (adopted 2016) and the saved policies of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan UDP (adopted 2006).

There are also Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's) and although not part of the development plan these documents are a material consideration.

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS)

SO2 Creating successful and healthy communities

C1 Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places

SO3 Improving design, image and quality of place

P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage

P3 Improving design of new development

SO4 Promoting a greener environment

G4 Protecting Green Belt

G6 Enhancing green infrastructure

G7 Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity

G8 Managing water resources and flood risk

G9 Reducing the impact of pollution

SO5 Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

T2 Improving accessibility

DM1 General development requirements

Saved policies of Unitary Development Plan 2006

G/D/2 Green Belt

EM/8 Protection of Surface and Ground Water

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's):

- Residential Design Guide (2007)
- Energy and New Development (2008)
- Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing (2008)
- Biodiversity and Development (2008)
- Climate Change Adaptation (2012)
- Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development (June 2016)

Section 5.0 - Planning Assessment

- 5.1 In this section the development proposals are assessed against the relevant policies of local and national planning policy.

Principle of development

Green Belt

- 5.2 The former Wicken Hall Mill site is a previously developed site within a wider Green Belt designation. This designation includes the settlement at Smithy Green comprising Smithy Green terrace and the new housing development at Carp View.
- 5.3 The proposed development would not result in harm to any of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt, and there is no conflict with para. 137 of the NPPF or Policy G4 of the CS. Clearly no unrestricted sprawl would occur, the development is within the well-defined boundaries of the previously developed site and there would be no encroachment into the countryside. This development would not result in the merging of towns, or have any impact of the setting and special character of historic towns. The development assists in the recycling of derelict land and will be of benefit through the provision of two family homes, and an improvement in biodiversity through the management of the mature trees and provision of landscape planting at the site perimeter.
- 5.4 Both the Development plan (Core Strategy 2016) and the NPPF state that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate development unless one of the stated exemptions to para. 149 can be demonstrated.
- 5.5 The application site provides a unique set of circumstances where development can be considered to be one of the stated exemptions to para 149 of the NPPF and therefore would not be inappropriate development.

Infill in existing villages

- 5.6 Para 149 of the NPPF sets out exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt which includes exception “e) limited infilling in villages”.
- 5.7 The application site is part of the existing Smithy Green settlement and is on the outskirts of the village of Newhey and is part of the wider village setting/extents.
- 5.8 In considering whether development constitutes infill it is necessary to consider the character of a site and it is a case of looking at each proposal on its merits.
- 5.9 The subject site clearly reads as part of the Smithy Green settlement and is bracketed by Smithy Green terrace and the development of houses at Carp View. The proposed houses are located within clearly defined lines of development.
- 5.10 The proposal is for two detached dwellings that would infill a previously developed site that is bordered by the following features:
- longstanding residential development directly to the west (1-6 Smithy Green).

- the existing access 'Lane Bottom' directly to the south and west.
 - substantial new build residential development directly to the south (1-4 Carp View).
 - existing outbuildings associated with Carp View to the south westerly corner.
 - historical structures associated with Wicken Hall Mill including high walling directly to the south, brick structures and walling to the north boundary of the site.
- 5.11 The proposed dwellings are located close to the existing access road and within the main cluster of buildings to the settlement that is clearly established by the Smithy Green terrace, the houses at Carp View and the previously developed mill site.
- 5.12 The proposed layout continues the linear form of development along Lane Bottom that was established by Smithy Green terrace and the former mill buildings and provides a consistent approach. The application site can accommodate the two dwellings comfortably whilst retaining adequate provision of landscaped gardens, and landscape screening to the external perimeter of the site. Two dwellings is considered to be an appropriate number to constitute limited infilling within the established boundaries of a previously developed site.
- 5.13 The proposed dwellings would be designed to be of a similar form to the existing terrace (Smithy Green) and would include the use of materials and design features to reference the existing buildings (Smithy Green and Carp View) and would be in keeping.
- 5.14 The site is generally level with composition of rubble fill and the developed nature of the site is clearly defined.
- 5.15 In character and appearance the subject site reads as being part of the Smithy Green settlement. There is a clear distinction between the character and appearance of the subject site and the contrast with the steep slope to the east that is heavily treed and the north boundary that is heavily treed and with the land grading down steeply to Wicken Hall Clough.
- 5.16 We reserve our position that the subject site can be considered as an infill plot to the Smithy Green settlement and therefore can be considered as appropriate development under para.149(e) of the NPPF.

Example of infill development in Rochdale Authority

- 5.17 In refusing planning permission for the construction of a detached dwelling to land at the rear of 190 Heywood Old Road, Middleton, Rochdale MBC had assessed that the development of a detached dwelling did not represent infilling (ref; 21/00790/FUL). The Council refused development stating that it would constitute inappropriate development were it in the Green Belt. The reason for refusal also referred to "...and would additionally lead to a significant loss of openness of the site".

- 5.18 In the officers report there was an assessment of impact on openness and consideration that 'Openness' is split into two distinct parts: Visual and Spatial. In assessing the visual component the Council assessed that the dwelling would protrude above the landscape, restricting views through the site and resulting in harm to openness. In assessing the spatial component the Council assessed that the proposed building would increase the massing on site, thus prejudicing its openness. The LPA concluded that the harm on openness would prejudice the provisions of para. 137 of the NPPF.
- 5.19 This application was allowed at appeal with the Inspector determining that the appeal proposal can be considered to be limited infilling within an established pocket of housing.
- 5.20 The appeal inspector commented that the applicant and LPA had made reference to the proposal not filling a gap in an otherwise built-up frontage and it was acknowledged that there is no definition of what constitutes limited infilling in local policy or in the Framework. The Inspector commented on being able to see a variety of garages and buildings along the lane in the vicinity of the site and a house under construction. The Inspector was satisfied that there was sufficient development in close proximity for the proposal to be considered as infill.

Limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land

- 5.21 Para 149 of the NPPF sets out exceptions to inappropriate development in the Green Belt which includes exception "g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land; whether redundant or in continuing use, and which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development.
- 5.22 The application site forms part of the established curtilage of what was originally Wicken Hall Mill (dye works and subsequently printing works).
- 5.23 This is clearly evidenced by Ordnance Survey mapping that is included at appendix 2). Historical mapping first indicates that there was a Mill (Falling Mill) to the subject site from the 1851-54 mapping. To the 1884 mapping a bleaching and dye works is referenced. By 1888 mapping shows extensive buildings to the southern part of the site again referenced as bleach and dye works, and some small buildings and a gasometer to the subject site. Smithy Green terrace is also built by this time.
- 5.24 By 1909 historical mapping references 'Wicken Hall Printing Works' with expansion of the buildings to cover the majority of the southern site.
- 5.25 To the 1930 mapping buildings are shown to cover the majority of the subject site forming the north parcel of Wicken Hall Printing Works' and the filter tanks are constructed to the north of the site. It would appear that the waste water from both the south and north mill parcels was directed through the subject site to the filter tanks and discharged just beyond the north boundary to Wicken Hall Clough.
- 5.26 There is then little change to the 1963-64, 1985 and 1992 mapping in terms of the extent of the mill buildings with both the south and north site being largely covered with built structures.

- 5.27 By 2005 it appears that a number of the buildings have been taken down to the subject site (north parcel) but the mapping still shows extensive built form that may still be buildings or concrete slabs. Some buildings are still present to the southern part of the subject land and this is consistent with my own observations that a brick building and concrete slabs were still present to the south of the subject site as recently as 2013.
- 5.28 Wicken Hall Mill was built as two areas of development to either side of the access road but has evolved and functioned as one entity.
- 5.29 The subject land is an integral part of the Wicken Hall Mill premises and planning consent has already been granted for redevelopment of the southern section of the mill site with new housing development (1-4 Carp View). Development of the subject land should be considered within the overall context of this previously developed site and the substantial buildings that covered most of the land area.
- 5.30 Wicken Hall Mill including the application site is previously developed land as defined in appendix 2 of the NPPF. Para. 149 (g) allows for limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land where development would not have a greater impact on openness of the Green Belt than the existing development: or would not cause substantial harm to openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.31 Two dwellings are proposed that are within the clearly defined curtilage of the mill site, are located close to the existing access road (Lane Bottom) and existing housing development (Smithy Green and Carp View), and are of a form and scale that is in keeping with the existing buildings.
- 5.32 In granting planning consent for residential development at Carp View (south area of mill use) the principle of residential development of a previously developed site in this locality was established.
- 5.33 The subject site was not included at the time of the application for the associated land (1-4 Carp View), but this does not prevent the consideration of the overall site now, or consideration of how the overall Wicken Hall Mill premises should be redeveloped in the context of the Smithy Green settlement.
- 5.34 Development of the subject site would be beneficial to complete the redevelopment of Wicken Hall Mill and what is derelict land. This can allow a strengthening of the Smithy Green community and provide an improvement visually through a clean-up of a derelict site.
- 5.35 Historical mapping clearly identifies the extents of the mill buildings that were present and it is evident that the whole of the subject site was covered with buildings and built development including concrete slabs and filter tanks. By comparison the proposed development of the two house footprints will be 19% of the site area.
- 5.36 The Mill buildings were built right up to Lane Bottom and would have been highly prominent when viewed from the terrace at Smithy Green or from views along Lane Bottom. The proposed dwellings are set back into the site promoting openness and not dominating the settlement as the Mill buildings did.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.37 The landscape and visual impact of the development has been assessed to consider the anticipated effects resulting from the development on the character and features of the landscape and on people's views and visual amenity.
- 5.38 It is noted that views from some footpaths are enclosed or substantially screened by vegetation and in many cases the undulating topography prevents views of the site.
- 5.39 The subject area is relatively small scale and low-lying and therefore discreet within the landscape.
- 5.40 The application site is well enclosed by existing trees.
- 5.41 The subject site forms part of a pleasant landscape but one which is heavily influenced by its close proximity to the Smithy Green settlement. Views are restricted by vegetation and include built form with the Smithy Green terrace and new build housing development at Carp View. The landscape has an urban element and is not open greenspace.



Image 2 – View from access road to Smithy Green from south

- 5.42 The site makes little or no contribution to the scenic quality of the wider area as it is well enclosed by the valley side and existing vegetation. The existing dwellings within the Smithy Green settlement are partially visible and urbanise the views. It is considered that the site comprises land that is read within the context of the Smithy Green settlement and does not perform a valuable landscape function.
- 5.43 It is assessed that the scale of development is appropriate to the scale of the landscape and it is considered that the susceptibility to change of the character of the wider landscape is low.

- 5.44 Susceptibility to change of the landscape character within the immediate locality is assessed as low.
- 5.45 The existing trees provide enclosure and visual screening where the site interfaces with the undeveloped Green Belt. The planting of additional trees, as well as native understory planting would strengthen and enhance the screening of the site. A native hedgerow is proposed around the site periphery to provide further low-level visual screening.
- 5.46 The mill site is well enclosed by existing tree belts which limits the visibility of the site in views from the wider landscape.
- 5.47 The site is small, low-lying, well contained, and discreet in the landscape. It is closely associated with the Smithy Green settlement, the buildings of which are partially visible from the settlement edge but are well screened in longer distance views from the higher land to the east, west and south. In any case, these longer distance views include the existing settlement and any filtered views of buildings are seen in this context.



Image 3 – View towards Smithy Green from Wicken Hall

- 5.48 The scale of the development is small and is appropriate to the scale of the landscape. The design and materials proposed for the dwellings aligns with the existing buildings (1-6 Smithy Green and 1-4 Carp View) and is in keeping with the local vernacular.
- 5.49 There is opportunity to manage the existing trees to the periphery of the site and introduce new trees, understory planting and hedgerows to reinforce the existing landscape character. This would enhance the appearance of the landscape as well as providing ecological interest, habitat connectivity and biodiversity gain.
- 5.50 The proposed dwellings are well associated with the terrace opposite and the new build development directly to the south. Local materials and styles are incorporated, and the buildings assimilate well into their setting in terms of siting, scale and design.

- 5.51 The site is well screened to the north and west by mature trees at the boundary. The proposals include the management of the existing trees and native planting which would re-inforce the landscaping around the boundaries of the site. The proposed planting would be entirely appropriate to the setting, would enhance the visual appearance of the local area and provide ecological benefits.
- 5.52 There is a perception that the site is already developed, due to the rubble composition of the site and close proximity to the existing buildings and access road. The proposals would be in keeping with the existing character of the locality with little or no perceptible change in longer distance views.
- 5.53 The size and scale of effect on the landscape character within the immediate locality upon completion as a result of the proposals would be negligible.
- 5.54 In assessing impact on the Green Belt it is assessed that there are very few locations close to the edge of the settlement from which the subject site is visible. This is largely due to the level of enclosure and screening provided by existing buildings and vegetation.
- 5.55 In views from PRowS which lie within the immediate vicinity of the site, the existing mature boundary tree belts filter views of the former mill site. The terrace of houses and new housing development are partially visible resulting in an urban edge character. As such, when walking on the PRowS within the vicinity of the site, the experience is one of being on the edge of settlement rather than a wholly rural context.
- 5.56 The site is perceived as part of the Smithy Green settlement due to its close association with the existing buildings and because of the steep wooded valley slopes which envelops the wider settlement. There is a clear distinction between the developed extents of the settlement (which includes the application site), and the surrounding countryside. The site therefore makes no contribution to a sense of openness when viewed from the PRowS close to the settlement edge.
- 5.57 The scale of the proposed development is small, and the buildings would assimilate well into their setting in terms of siting, scale and design. The proposals would be in keeping with their surroundings, with negligible change to the character or appearance of the area. In views from the settlement, there would be no effect on the perceived openness of the Green Belt as a result of the proposals.
- 5.58 In assessing the effects of any perceived encroachment into the Green Belt the site is closely associated with the existing built form to the settlement. Its character is distinct from the countryside which surrounds it. The proposals would be confined within the extents of the former mill site and would be well screened by the steep valley sides and dense tree cover. The development would not encroach into the surrounding countryside and the function and purpose of the Green Belt would remain.
- 5.59 In terms of planning the site would not meet the criteria of 'Valued Landscape' in terms of NPPF. There would be no disturbance to the character of the wider landscape.

- 5.60 The site is within a Green Belt designation but is closely associated with the existing settlement. The proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt and would not encroach into the countryside which surrounds the wider settlement.
- 5.61 It is noted that in granting approval for demolition of an existing bungalow and erection of 4 dwellings (63388/Full) a neighbouring authority (Bury MBC) allowed a significant increase in building footprint (259%). We appreciate that this consent was granted as infill in a village but consider it relevant that in assessing the impact on the character of the village the LPA were prepared to support a significant increase in building footprint and volume.
- 5.62 In this decision (63388/Full) officer's commented that in the context of infilling in villages (paragraph 145(e) of the NPPF), **the primary factor is the impact the development would have on the character of the village within the wider Green Belt rather than the loss of openness per se**. It was noted by officers that the trees are a particularly important mitigating factor in the assessment, both reducing views across the existing site and partly screening the new build from Bolton Road. It was assessed by officers that **"The development would be viewed through the retained tree line which would significantly reduce its visual impact and reinforce the semi-rural and village setting"**.
- 5.63 The application site is an integral part of the former Wicken Hall Mill site and is previously developed land. The proposed dwellings would result in a small scale of development compared to the former mill buildings.
- 5.64 Considering the subject proposal on its merits the proposed dwellings would be sited within the established curtilage of the Wicken Hall Mill site, and would be of a form and scale that is sympathetic to the built development at the Smithy Green settlement.



Image 4 – View towards site and existing development lines

- 5.65 The proposed infill development would respect existing development lines with the buildings located close to the existing access and grouping of buildings to the Smithy Green settlement, and having a similar alignment to the

development that took place to the southern section of the Wicken Hall Mill site (1-4 Carp View).

- 5.66 Development is proposed upto but not beyond the existing embankment to the east that clearly defines the east slope of the valley and a clear distinction between the previously developed site of the mill and the greenspace beyond.
- 5.67 The character of the Smithy Green settlement is influenced significantly by the traditional two storey terrace and two/three storey dwellings at Carp View. The settlement is sat down within the valley with the central access passing through and connecting with the wider Wicken Hall settlement and Newhey village centre. The subject site forms part of an established curtilage. Any views into the site from the north and east would be very limited due to the steep topography of the adjacent valley and dense screening providing at the boundaries by the mature trees. From the south and west the site is viewed in the context of the existing Smithy Green settlement and the backdrop of the existing houses.
- 5.68 The proposed dwellings would be viewed within the context of the existing settlement and would sit comfortably within this. There would not be a significant change in the character of the settlement.
- 5.69 The views to and beyond the site are limited due to the steep wooded valley sides, and the existing mature trees providing natural screening to the boundaries.
- 5.70 The site benefits from dense natural screening, with mature trees and shrubs to the north and west boundaries. Robust and effective screening is provided to limit views in to and out of this previously developed site. The proposed dwellings are located close to the existing grouping of buildings to the existing settlement and will be viewed within the site against this substantial backdrop of existing development.

Example of infill development to a previously developed site (Rochdale MBC)
190 Heywood Old Road, Middleton, M24 4GR (application Ref 21/00790/FUL)

- 5.71 In consideration of this appeal for construction of a detached house the Inspector makes reference that para 149 g) of the Framework requires the development not to have a greater impact on openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. The Inspector acknowledges that the proposal for a dwelling would involve the erection of a building where there is currently none, however, spatially, it sits within a clear building envelope. The Inspector considered that visually the new building would have no greater effect on openness and would spatially be interpreted as falling within a well-defined residential envelope.

Example of infill development to a previously developed site with a Green Belt designation in neighbouring authority (Bury MBC)

- 5.72 Planning consent was granted by a neighbouring authority (Bury MBC) for the erection of two dwellings at 249-251 Bury and Bolton Road (consent ref;56899). This site has a Green belt designation in the Development Plan and we understand that approval was granted as limited infilling and/or redevelopment of previously developed land (exception g) of paragraph 149 of the NPPF).

- 5.73 This was an open and highly prominent site that had previously been used as a petrol filling station. No buildings of any significant scale had existed to the site (the main petrol filling station being to the south side of Bury and Bolton Road), and any above ground development had been cleared for a significant period of years. This site did not benefit from significant screening at the boundaries and there were unrestricted views into the site from the Green Belt to the north.
- 5.74 This decision (56899) suggests that Bury Authority considered that this proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development, and that a significant increase in development scale and volume could be supported to a previously developed site in the Green Belt. In this case Bury Authority did not limit consideration of openness in purely spatial and volumetric terms but also considered the visual concept of openness.

Section 6.0 –Benefits of development and Very Special Circumstances

- 6.1 It is considered that the proposed development qualifies as appropriate development under exceptions e) and g) of paragraph 149 of the NPPF and in those circumstances it is not necessary to consider Very Special Circumstances.
- 6.2 Should the LPA consider that they will not apply these exceptions to support the proposed development we consider **Very Special Circumstances exist** that would outweigh any potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, or any other perceived harm resulting from the proposal.
- 6.3 The Very Special Circumstances
- The site is derelict land comprising the remaining part of the Wicken Hall Mill site. Redevelopment to a residential use that is compatible with the Smithy Green settlement would be beneficial through an **improvement in the appearance of a derelict site, and would add vitality and strengthen the existing community.**
 - The PRA that has been undertaken has identified a moderate to high risk of contamination to this site following a long period of use for industry, including use as dyeing works and printing works. Redevelopment provides the **opportunity to remediate the land and derelict land that is part of a previously developed site would be put to an efficient use.** This would provide long term certainty over development of the central core of the Smithy Green settlement and would avoid the possibility of having an area of derelict and unmaintained land detracting from the amenity of the adjoining homes..
 - An **improvement in biodiversity** can be achieved through the management of the existing trees and the proposals for new landscape planting.
 - The addition of two low rise dwellings built with traditional materials sits comfortably within the existing settlement and the established curtilage of the previously developed mill site. There is natural screening by the steep valley sides and heavily wooded slopes and the dwellings would not be readily discernible in the wider landscape and the potential impacts on the landscape would be negligible. The proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt and that an **improvement in the landscape and visual appearance of the previously developed land can be achieved through the development proposals.**
 - **Ecological benefits** can be achieved through the landscaping proposals, and the ecological enhancements that are proposed.
 - **Two family homes would be provided** in an area where there is strong demand for this, and very little opportunity to build new homes. The provision of two family homes would **contribute to supply where there is high demand.** This helps to relieve the pressure for development of other less suitable Green Belt sites in the Newhey area to provide the new housing that is needed.
 - The Council has identified a **need to provide more aspirational homes in the Borough (Policy C3).** Two 5-bedroom detached houses in the Smithy Green settlement would contribute to this stated aspiration.

- **Two houses are to be provided as self-build plots.** The Council are required to make provision for self-build homes and these dwellings would contribute to this need.
- 6.4 In granting consent for a large single dwelling in a Green Belt designation in Ramsbottom (66308/Full) the case for VSC's was accepted by a neighbouring authority (Bury MBC). Officers considered that the addition of this single dwelling, on the edge of an existing settlement with natural screening **provided would not be overly incongruous or prominent within the identified visual envelope and would not materially alter the view of the Green Belt location.** It was accepted that the potential change to public and private views would be negligible.
- 6.5 In accepting a lack of visual harm and landscape enhancements officers commented that the dwelling would be located behind a group of existing trees, a good proportion of the building would be screened. **It was considered that that the addition of a single dwelling, which is partially screened by tree planting would not be readily discernible and the potential impacts on the landscape would be negligible.**

Housing need

- 6.6 There is great demand for 4/5 bedroom family homes in the Newhey area and there is very limited previously developed land available to provide new homes. This proposal provides the **opportunity to supply two new family homes within the established curtilage of a previously developed site** without resulting in the pressure to seek development or encroachment of other areas of undeveloped Green Belt.
- 6.7 Core Strategy policy C3 'Delivering the right type of housing' sets out the **Council's aspiration to ensure that the supply of larger and higher value housing in the borough is improved**, and with the policy identifying a focus for this higher value housing in the north of the borough.
- 6.8 Two dwellings are proposed as self-build plots. The Self-build and Custom housebuilding Act 2015 requires that each Authority will keep a register of individuals and associations of individuals who wish to acquire serviced plots of land to bring forward self-build and custom housebuilding projects, and places a duty on public authorities to have regard to those registers in carrying out planning and other functions. Authorities are required to have regard to the provision of self-build plots when making decisions regarding planning, provision of housing and the regeneration of land. The provision of two new dwellings to this previously developed site presents an **opportunity for the provision of two fully serviced self-build plots.**
- 6.9 **The subject site is available for immediate development and could be delivered within a 5 year period.** The NPPF emphasises the need for Local Planning Authorities to boost the supply of housing to meet local needs and the proposed development would assist in contributing to the supply of housing land to the Smithy Green settlement and wider Newhey area.

Section 7.0 – Other considerations

Design

- 7.1 CS policy P3 requires all new development to adhere to high standards of design. The proposed dwellings are designed to reference the existing buildings in terms of form and scale, and the use of materials.
- 7.2 Design features from the existing buildings that have been drawn upon include:
- Rectangular building footprint with two storeys of development referencing building form of Smithy Green Terrace.
 - Linear development arranged along existing access road similar to terrace opposite and the former Mill buildings.
 - Pitched roofs with slate coverings (referencing Smithy Green Terrace), and feature pediments (referencing Carp View).
 - Stone facings to external walls (referencing existing dwellings).
 - Detailing to elevations with stone heads and sills (referencing existing dwellings).
- 7.3 The height of the adjacent buildings has been considered and the proposed dwellings are designed to be of a lesser height (7.83 metres from finished floor level to ridge), as follows;
- Smithy Green terrace = 8.76 metres FFL to ridge (0.93metres higher than proposal).
 - 2 Carp View = 10.88 metres FFL to ridge (3.05metres higher than proposal).
 - 3 Carp View = 10.88 metres FFL to ridge (3.05 metres higher than proposal).
 - 4 Carp View = 8.59 metres FFL to ridge (0.76 metres higher than proposal).



Image 5 – Three storey build at Carp View

- 7.4 The siting, scale and orientation of the dwellings has been carefully considered in order to ensure that the dwellings sit comfortably with the development plot,

and to achieve satisfactory separation distances and amenity for the neighbouring buildings (1-6 Smithy Green opposite).

- 7.5 Boundary treatments have been kept at a low level (1.5 metre high post and rail fencing and 1.2 metre high stone walling), and are appropriate and in keeping with the semi-rural location.
- 7.6 In accordance with Rochdale MBC's parking standards a minimum of two parking spaces are provided to each dwelling with a further space available to the integral garages. The drives and parking areas are constructed with permeable resin bound gravel and providing sustainable drainage.

Lighting

- 7.7 Paragraph 180 (bullet point c) of the NPPF states that development should: 'limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation'.
- 7.8 During the construction phase any lighting to be used should be directional and screened where possible, and this specification is to be included in the Construction Management Plan (CMP).
- 7.9 The development lighting scheme will include the use of appropriate products and screening, to ensure no excessive artificial lighting shines over the boundary trees, new hedgerow and any landscape planting, as lighting overspill may deter use by wildlife such as foraging bats.

Ecology

- 7.10 An Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken by Pennine Ecological.
- 7.11 The site is described as dominated by unvegetated, unsealed surface which was suspected to be tarmac chippings.
- 7.12 The appraisal confirms there are no statutory designated sites identified within 2km of the site.
- 7.13 Two non-statutory designated sites were recorded within 1km of the site but due to the localised nature of the proposals no impacts are anticipated during or following construction.
- 7.14 No Priority Habitats are present at the site. Invasive plants were recorded within the site and will require treatment and control measures to allow development.
- 7.15 Surveys were undertaken for protected species including badger, great crested newt, bats, otter and water vole and no significant observations were recorded and confirmation that no further surveys are recommended.
- 7.16 It is assessed that the proposals will secure an opportunity to implement beneficial measures such as habitat enhancement and creation that will safeguard habitats for wildlife such as birds and bats, with the aim of providing a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with the principles of the NPPF.

- 7.17 It is concluded that the proposals are feasible and acceptable in accordance with ecological considerations and relevant planning policy. The proposals present an opportunity to secure ecological enhancement for wildlife associated with residential development.
- 7.18 The installation of two bat access panels is proposed (one per dwelling), and two bat boxes are to be installed onto suitable retained mature trees to the periphery of the subject site.
- 7.19 Bird boxes associated with woodland bird species are to be installed to the retained mature trees at the periphery of the subject site (Schwegler 3SV, 1N, 2M, and 2H bird boxes).

Landscaping proposals

- 7.20 A landscaping design is submitted that illustrates the hard and soft landscaping details.
- 7.21 The development proposals provide an opportunity for biodiversity and landscaping improvements. There are a number of mature trees to the site boundaries and where these are in a healthy condition they are to be retained and compensatory tree planting is proposed for the trees that are required to be felled due to disease.
- 7.22 Planting is proposed with woodland wildflower mix and native bulb planting. New hedge planting is proposed around the site perimeter and between the plots with native hedge species. Habitat log piles are proposed for colonisation by invertebrates, fungi and small mammals.
- 7.23 The amenity areas will be formed with a shade tolerant lawn mix. Planting is proposed to be native species, and species known to be of value to wildlife. Trees are specified that will support blossom and fruit that will attract insects. Shade tolerant understorey and ground cover planting is proposed to attract invertebrates, and flowering species to maximise the opportunities for feeding invertebrates and for the attraction of foraging bats and birds.
- 7.24 The landscaping proposals will provide a visual improvement to the landscape and will increase biodiversity and support ecological enhancement.

Contaminated Land

- 7.25 A phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment of the subject site has been undertaken and this provides sufficient information on the potential contaminative status of the site to allow issue of conditional planning approval.
- 7.26 The PRA identifies deep made ground to the site (estimated to be 7 metres depth) and likely pertaining from infilling of the site to raise the site levels and facilitate the industrial development of the site. It is assessed that there is a moderate to high risk of contamination as well as contamination hotspots within the infill material, and a risk of ground gas.

- 7.27 A moderate to high risk of determinands anticipated to be compounds associated with ground gas processing has been identified due to the presence of a gasometer in the northern section of the site.
- 7.28 A moderate to high risk of determinands anticipated to be metals as a result of the industrial processes to the subject site and adjacent site.
- 7.29 A moderate to high risk of determinands anticipated to be pigments, dyes, extenders and binders, solvents, asbestos, PCB's and fuels as a result of the majority of the site being developed with buildings and used as Wicken Hall Print Works.
- 7.30 The PRA assesses there to be a moderate to high likelihood of significant sources of contamination to this site due to the deep made ground, and use for industrial purposes.
- 7.31 Development of the site for housing could facilitate a further programme of intrusive investigation, and subsequent remediation of a previously developed site.

Access

- 7.32 There is a network of access roads to the existing Wicken Hall settlement;
- access from the north via Lane Bottom and Ogden Lane to Huddersfield Road. The Councils refuse collections utilise this access.
 - Access from the west to the rear of Smithy Green to A640 Huddersfield Road.
 - Access to the south from lanes passing through wider Wicken Hall settlement with access to A640 Huddersfield Road.
- 7.33 In consideration of the application for development of the southern area of the Wicken Hall Mill site for 4 dwellings (application Ref 13/00323) local authority highway engineers assessed that the proposal would not give rise to a significant amount of additional traffic. Engineers commented that there would be some extra traffic using the narrow stone-settled access road from Lane Bottom but the road surface and general characteristics of that road should act as an effective 'traffic calming' measure. It was assessed by engineers that there would be some extra traffic directly accessing the site to and from the A640 but this would not have a significant effect on road safety.
- 7.34 Two dwellings are proposed that will represent a minimal increase in traffic. Where the access point to the dwellings is proposed Lane Bottom has a straight alignment allowing good visibility from one end to the other. This access has been utilised over a long period to serve the original Mill, Smithy Green settlement, and wider Wicken Hall settlement beyond.
- 7.35 The LPA had previously assessed that the existing access is suitable to serve a more intensive residential use of the former Mill site to the south for nine apartments (ref: D46096). The addition of two dwellings will not result in a significant increase in traffic generation, and would still be a lesser number of dwellings than the LPA had assessed could be served by the existing access when granting approval for previous housing consents to the land directly to the south.

- 7.36 It is considered that the existing access is adequate to serve two additional dwellings. There would not be a significant rise in traffic as a result of the proposals and there would not be a significant effect on road safety.

Trees

- 7.37 An Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA) has been undertaken by Mulberry TMC. This confirms the location of the existing trees along with identifying the species size and condition and assess the impact of the development proposals. Tree canopy and Tree Root Protection Areas are confirmed.
- 7.38 The impact of the development in relation to the trees has been assessed to determine the need for any remedial measures. It is noted that the proposed drainage has been located to sit outside the RPA of those trees for retention with the exception of a small encroachment into Group G4. It is assessed that due to the ground conditions and the limited extent of encroachment the proposed works will not have a detrimental impact upon the trees.
- 7.39 It is concluded that by following the advice in the AIA any negative factors affecting the trees on site will be minimised.

Flood risk and drainage strategy

- 7.40 A Drainage Strategy Report is submitted with this application.
- 7.41 The report confirms that the subject site is within Flood Zone 1 with a low risk of flooding and the proposed site area is less than 1.0 hectare. In line with criteria set within the NPPF a Flood Risk Assessment is not required.
- 7.42 The report assesses Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) as an option for reducing surface water flood risk, and devises outline strategies for surface and foul water drainage.
- 7.43 The surface water drainage strategy will be to collect runoff from the roof area and direct it to geocellular storage within the rear garden area. This will then outfall into the culverted watercourse on site at a controlled rate.
- 7.44 The foul water drainage strategy is to construct separate foul water drains with discharge to a new package treatment plant, prior to outfalling into the culverted watercourse.

Section 8.0 – Conclusion

- 8.1 The former Wicken Hall Mill site is unique in terms of its original use, characteristics and setting, and is a previously developed site that housed substantial buildings within a developed and clearly defined curtilage.
- 8.2 We have explained why the proposed development is compliant with local and national planning policy, and why granting of consent would be consistent with other planning consents granted by Rochdale MBC.
- 8.3 We have identified that the development would be an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt as defined in paragraph 149, through exceptions;
 - e) limited infilling in villages,
 - g) limited infilling of previously developed land where development would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 8.4 The landscape and visual impact has been assessed to consider the effects resulting from the development on the character and features of the landscape, and on people's views and amenity.
- 8.5 The subject land is a previously developed site (brownfield) within the Green Belt and is closely associated with existing housing development to the Smithy Green settlement. It is concluded that the proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt and would not encroach into the countryside which surround the former Wicken Hall Mill site and existing settlement.
- 8.6 The proposed dwellings are sited close to the existing access and grouping of houses. The dwellings would be viewed against the backdrop of the existing settlement with both the existing terrace (Smithy Green terrace) and modern housing development being more substantial in terms of height, massing and footprint. Any view of the dwellings will be with the backdrop of the existing housing settlement and as a result the proposal will not materially change or therefore harm the openness or visual appearance of the brownfield site within the Green Belt setting.
- 8.7 This modest and well screened development of two dwellings would not have any adverse impact on the five purposes of Green Belt set out in paragraph 138 of the NPPF.
- 8.8 It is concluded that the development can be considered as infilling in a village, and would also be limited infilling of previously developed land. The openness of the Green Belt would be preserved, and the development would not conflict with any of the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.
- 8.9 The proposed development offers a number of Economic, Social and Environmental benefits, including;
 - Economic benefits
 - Benefits during and after construction by providing employment and support for local services and the generation of additional revenue in the local economy.
 - Increased income for the Council through new homes bonus and Council Tax revenues.

Social benefits

- Contribution of two family homes to the Authorities housing supply in an area where there is great demand for this type of housing.
- Social benefits to an existing residential location by allowing future occupants to form part of the local community.
- Natural surveillance and occupation of derelict land that is previously developed to help address crime and anti-social behaviour issues.

Environmental benefits

- The recycling and regeneration of previously developed land within an established residential setting.
- Remediation of the former mill site providing a long term environmental benefit.
- Securing the long term management of the woodland to the periphery of this site, and the opportunity to re-inforce this habitat through the provision of further tree and landscape planting.
- Improvements to the biodiversity and ecology of the site through the provision of ecological enhancements and landscape planting.

- 8.10 Should the LPA not agree that the proposals are limited in filling in a village, or limited infilling to a previously developed site then we consider that **Very Special Circumstances** exist that would outweigh any potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, or any other perceived harm resulting from the proposal.

VSC 1

- **Recycling of derelict land and remediation of the former mill site.**

VSC 2

- The existing trees to the periphery of the site are unmanaged and several trees are diseased and require felling. The proposals in the submitted tree survey, ecological report and landscape design would allow for the **long term management of the trees and an improvement in biodiversity.**

VSC 3

- An assessment of the landscape and visual impact identifies that the proposals would not affect the openness of the Green Belt, and that an **improvement in the landscape and visual appearance of the previously developed site can be achieved through the development proposals.**

VSC 4

- **Ecological benefits** can be achieved through the landscaping proposals and the ecological enhancements that are proposed.

VSC 5

- **Vacant and derelict land that is part of a previously developed site would be put to an efficient use.** This would provide long term certainty over the development of a previously developed site that is at the core of the Smithy Green settlement and would avoid the possibility of having an area of vacant and unmaintained land detracting from the amenity of the adjoining homes.

VSC 6

- Two family homes would be provided in an area where there is strong demand for this, and very little opportunity to build new homes. Rochdale MBC have set out their **aim to increase the number of aspirational homes in the borough (policy C3)** and the development would contribute to this ambition.

VSC 7

- **Two self-build plots would be provided** that would assist the authority in meeting their obligation to make provision for self-build plots.

8.11 The application is in compliance with the NPPF and the development plan and in the planning balance the demonstrated benefits clearly outweigh any perceived harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness.

Issued 21st December 2022

APPENDIX 1 – PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Plate 1 - View of subject site in relation to housing at Carp View and Smithy Green



Plate 2 – Subject site in relation to access road and Carp View development



Plate 3 - View of subject site



Plate 4 – View from subject site to Carp View development



Plate 5 - View from subject site with access passing to east of Carp View



Plate 6 – View from access to east boundary of Carp View



Plate 7 - View to subject site from access to east of Carp View development



Plate 8 - Retaining wall from Mill development at south east of site



Plate 9 – View of wooded embankment beyond east boundary.



Plate 10 – View along site frontage and Lane Bottom



Plate 11 – View of site from access adjacent to 1 Carp View



Plate 12 – View towards site from access leading up to Huddersfield Road



Plate 13 – View to north and subject site from Carp View



Plate 14 – Front elevation to 3 Carp View



Plate 15 – Housing to three phase electrical supply to former Mill buildings



Plate 16 – Mill retaining wall and culvert discharge at north boundary



Plate 17 – Brick structure from Mill use located at north boundary



Plate 18 – View from access to site frontage



Plate 19 – View towards Smithy Green Settlement from access road to south



Plate 20 – View from Wicken Hall towards Smithy Green settlement

APPENDIX 2 – HISTORICAL MAPPING

2.1 – Wicken Hall Mill – 1963-64 mapping

2.2 - Wicken Hall Mill – 2003 mapping