

Advice Note –Very Special Circumstances

South Heywood, Plot 3 – Outline Planning permission for 40,000 sqm of Use Class B8 (Storage & Distribution)

1. Background

- 1.1 This advice note has been prepared by Avison Young, on behalf of our client Russell Homes and relates to the current outline planning application submitted to Rochdale Borough Council (ref: 22/01569/OUT) on the 09 January 2023 on Land On Plot 3 Of The South Heywood Masterplan Off Pilsworth Road South Heywood, Rochdale.
- 1.2 This note has been prepared in response to comments raised on the application and sets out the latest case for 'very special circumstances' ('VSC') for the proposed development. This should be read with the accompanying Economic and Regeneration Update.

2. Very Special Circumstances Case

- 2.1 As set out in the Planning Statement submitted as part of the outline planning application, the proposed development falls within the Green Belt and does not meet any of the exceptions detailed in Paragraph 49. As such it is necessary to consider if the harm associated within the development by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, can be clearly outweighed by other considerations such that VSCs exist which justify the approval of the inappropriate development in the Green Belt, in accordance with paragraph 148 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF').

Harm to the Green Belt

- 2.2 In order to identify the level of Green Belt harm by virtue of the development's inappropriateness, it is appropriate to assess the proposed development against the 5 purposes of the Green Belt and identify the potential impact the proposed development would have on the openness of the Green Belt.

Impact on the purposes of the Green Belt

- 2.3 The applicant's assessment of the development against the 5 purposes of the Green Belt is set out below:
- *To check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas* – the site benefits from an extant hybrid planning permission for a major mixed-use development (ref: 16/01399/HYBR) which would allow, subject to Reserved Matters approval, the development of employment uses on the site, within the same area. The current outline application accords with the approved land use and maximum height parameters and extends no further into the Green Belt than that approved in the hybrid planning permission (ref: 16/01399/HYBR). As such, the development would not result in any further harm to this purpose than the already established fallback position.
 - *To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another* – the development of this site would not reduce the separation distances between the built-up urban area and the nearest neighbouring settlement. Development of the site would not result in the merging of neighbouring towns and

would maintain the functions and separation of the Green Belt in this location. Moreover, the proposals do not sit in a critical gap between different settlements.

- *Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*- as per the above, given the existing extant fallback position, there is limited harm to this purpose as the development extent is already established through the approved parameter plans; there is no further encroachment into the Green Belt.
- *To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns* – South Heywood is not a recognised historic town and there are none within the vicinity of the site. Therefore, this purpose does not apply and development at this site does not affect the purpose of preserving the setting and special character of a historic town.
- *To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling or derelict and other urban land* – the development of this site would not prevent the recycling of derelict or other urban land to enable the Council to meet the Borough's development needs over the plan period. In fact, it is noted that the site has been allocated in the emerging Places for Everyone Plan and the Rochdale Draft Allocations DPD¹, as it is clear that the additional land is required to meet the development needs.

Impact on the openness of the Green Belt

- 2.4 It is the Applicant's case that the proposed development would not result in significant additional impacts to the openness of the Green Belt over the established fallback position, on the basis that the proposed development would not result in a change to the approved parameter plans, in relation to land use, building height, access and provision of landscape buffers. The harm to the openness of the Green Belt is therefore very limited in the context of the established fallback position.

Summary of overall harm to the Green Belt

- 2.5 In summary, the development of this site would result in limited harm to the purposes of including land in the Green Belt and the openness of the Green Belt. Substantial weight should be given to this limited harm, in accordance with paragraph 148 of the NPPF.

Any other Harm

- 2.6 It is the application case, as set out in the submitted Supporting Planning Statement and technical assessments, that the proposed development would not result in any other technical harm in terms of landscape and visual impact, highways and access, flood risk, ecology, or design matters.

Very Special Circumstances

- 2.7 In accordance with Paragraph 148 of the NPPF, VSC exists when the harm is clearly outweighed by other considerations. It is the applicant's position that the following points clearly outweigh the overall harm identified above and as such "very special circumstances" clearly exist.
- 2.8 Chapter 6 of the NPPF expresses an importance to build a strong, competitive economy. As set out in further detail in the enclosed Economic and Regeneration Update note, the proposal development of an additional 40,000sqm would result in substantial economic, social and environmental benefits, which are summarised in Table 1 below.

¹ Employment Allocation, AL/EMP/33 – Land bound by Manchester Road / Hareshill Road / Pilsworth Road, Heywood

Table 1. Benefits with approving the additional B8 floorspace

Scheme Benefits	Significance
Economic Benefits - Contributing an additional 86 FTE jobs per annum during the construction of the development - Contributing an additional 519 FTE jobs per annum when the end use is operational - Contributing an additional 104 FTE jobs per annum in the wider economy - Providing the local economy with an additional GVA boost of circa. £5.2m per annum during the construction phase for plot 3 only - Implementing an existing Employment and Training Strategy, with the sole intention of securing training and job opportunities for local people. This would be applied here - Additional business rates of circa. £900k for plot 3 development only - Indirect GVA impact of circa. £26m for plot 3 only, and resulting in a GVA of £201M across the wider South Heywood Development - Intention to submit the reserved matters application imminently, demonstrating deliverability and working proactively with the Council. - Providing a significant new local employer, with clear opportunity for the scheme to provide new employment opportunities for local residents which could contribute to tackling the issue of deprivation in Rochdale	High
Social Benefits - Providing an employment use which supports neighbouring and local vibrant communities - Employment generation resulting in improved security, living standards, social cohesion, health and well-being - Provide new employment opportunities for local residents which helps contribute to tackling the issue of deprivation in Rochdale as set out further in the enclosed Economic and Regeneration Update note. - Can achieve a high-quality design - Compatible use with the surrounding area - No impacts on the historic environment, preserving heritage assets	Moderate
Environmental Benefits - Fully maximizing the use of land to secure additional employment space without further encroachment into the green belt - No additional harm cause in relation to noise, air quality and biodiversity / ecology - Creating a highly accessible development which can encourage staff to travel using more sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling as the development will be located closely to residential areas, with accessible walking and cycling routes	High

• Measures will be incorporated to reduce waste and promote recycling. The Applicant has signed up to the Considerate Contractor Scheme • Commitment to deliver a BREEAM 'Excellent' rating and to achieve an EPC A rating • Targeting net-zero emissions during the construction phases • Implementing a host of renewable energy such as solar, air source heat pumps, energy saving intelligent PIR lighting, rainwater harvesting, electric vehicle charging points, water leak detection systems etc. • Engaging with a Management Company who will manage public open spaces in perpetuity.	
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Overall Green Belt Balance

- 2.9 It is the Applicant's case that the overall harm, by virtue of inappropriateness, impact on the purposes of the Green Belt, impact on openness and any other harm is limited. That being said, it is accepted, in accordance with paragraph 148 of the NPPF, that substantial weight should be given to this limited harm, especially given the extant planning fallback position.
- 2.10 It is evident from the above assessment, that the other considerations and substantial benefits of the scheme clearly outweigh the totality of the harm that would be caused and as such very special circumstance do exist.
- 2.11 This development represents a positive addition to the area, which results in socio-economic benefits, as highlighted in the accompanying Economic and Regeneration Update Report. This demonstrates that the jobs created will benefit the locality and will directly respond to key local issues including; below average annual incomes; relatively high unemployment rates (6% compared to 5.1% in Greater Manchester and 4.6% in England); unemployment rates of 21% for 16-19-year-olds.
- 2.12 This development also ensures efficient use of land, that already has planning consent for employment development within this part of the Green Belt (the fallback), results in no net loss of Green Belt land and accords with local policy in the Core Strategy and emerging Places for Everyone Plan which strongly supports employment development in this location.