

Our Ref: 2373/AAL

16th November 2023

GREEN BELT STATEMENT
FOR CHANGE OF USE OF FIRST FLOOR CLUBHOUSE
TO SELF CONTAINED DWELLING INCLUDING
MEANS OF ESCAPE STAIRCASE TO REAR
AT
WHITTAKER GOLF CLUB
WHITTAKER LANE,
WHITTAKER HAMLET
LITTLEBOROUGH OL15 0LH

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Green Belt statement has been prepared to accompany an application submitted to Rochdale Council on behalf of Whittaker Golf Club. To change the Use of the existing first floor to a single self contained
- 1.2 This statement will describe the application site and surroundings, detail the background and planning history relevant to this application, set out the application proposals, summarise the relevant national and local planning policy and discuss the material planning considerations before finally concluding.

2.0 Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site is situated adjacent to the existing golf club and is indicated on the location plan submitted with the application. The site is accessed from a spur road off the A58 via Blackstone Edge Old Road.
- 2.2 The site itself forms part of Whittaker Golf course. The site is situated between Littleborough Denshaw and Milnrow, in the Borough of Rochdale. And is situated in the Whittaker Conservation Area and Green Belt area.
- 2.3 The site is relatively flat. The boundaries, particularly to the south and North, are defined by mature trees all planted by the golf club themselves over the last 18 years and hedgerows, there are in addition a number of trees within the site that would be relocated.

3.0 Application Proposals

- 3.1 Planning permission is being sought for the construction of a proposed new clubhouse on the existing land currently being used in part as the car park. And to the East of the existing clubhouse, extending the existing car park facilities. The construction of a new bin storage enclosure also opposite the proposed new clubhouse.
- 3.2 In terms of physical development the proposals would include a new means of escape staircase from the rear of the Clubhouse and forming a new bin store area
- 3.3 The site is located within Green Belt but it is noted that one of the purposes for designating Green Belt is to encourage sport and recreation. With this in mind the proposal will allow the site to remain largely open, which is one of the key principals of designating green belt and is detailed in Section D/4 of the local Rochdale Council UDP

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5.0 Planning Policy

- 5.1 The application site is located within the Green Belt. The Government's policies concerning the Green Belt are contained within the national planning policy Framework. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping it permanently open with the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 5.2 NPPF states that local authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation.
- 5.3 Inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 5.4 NPPF states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, however exceptions to this are as follows
 - Buildings for agriculture and forestry;
 - Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, as long as it preserves the openness of the greenbelt and does not conflict of the purposes of including land within it;
 - The extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not resort disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
 - The replacement of a building providing the new buildings is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
 - Limited infilling in villages and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the local plan; or
 - Limited infilling or partial or complete redevelopment of previous development sites (brownfield land) whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact with the openness of the greenbelt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development.
- 5.5 Certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate Green Belt provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt. These are:
 - Mineral extraction;
 - Engineering operations;
 - Local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;

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- The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction; and
- Development brought forward under a Community Right to build order

5.6 Paragraph 47 of the framework confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with a development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Notwithstanding this, the NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions.

Development Plan

- 5.7 In this case the development plan for the area (adopted in June 2006)
- 5.8 UDP policy D/1-10 reflects the guidance contained within the framework, among other things indicates that there will be a general presumption against the construction of new buildings within the greenbelt except in certain stated purposes. Those purposes include facilities essential for outdoor sport and recreation.
- 5.9 Why development is acceptable in principle in the greenbelt under policy D/1-10 the council will also assess the proposals for their impact on the greenbelt in terms of the following factors
 - i) The detailed layout of the site.
 - ii) The siting, design, height and scale of building structures.
 - iii) The colour and suitability of building materials having regard for local style and materials.
 - iv) The opportunities to use redundant land and buildings for suitable alternative uses;
 - v) The quality of new landscape schemes;
 - vi) The impact on significant views, viewpoints and atop graphical features.
 - vii) The cumulative physical effect of proposals in any one area.
 - viii) The implications for local facilities particularly public services and infrastructure;
- 5.10 Policy G/EM/1 Environmental Protection requires all developments to make a positive contribution to the quality of the environment and the principles of sustainable development and will not permit development, which would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment.
- 5.11 The Rochdale core strategy was adopted in June 2006.
- 5.12 One of the spatial objectives of the Rochdale Core Strategy is for Green Belt boundaries to be maintained and protected from inappropriate development.

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6.0 Planning Considerations

- 6.1 Having regard to the previous sections of this statement, the main issues for consideration in this case relate to
 - Whether the development proposed comprises of appropriate development within the Green Belt having regard to the Green Belt policies of the development plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.
 - If it is inappropriate development, then what special circumstances exist to justify the proposals Appropriate development
- 6.2 This 39 Hectare site lies within the Green Belt. Notwithstanding the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework, the development plan is the starting point for decision making, in this case the development plan for the area Core Strategy adopted in June 2006 by Rochdale Council
- 6.3 Policy D/1-10 of the UDP sets out the approach to new development in the Green Belt. Of relevance to this case is Policy D/4 which sets out the guidance in relation to the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt. This is based on a presumption against development apart for certain purposes. These purposes include the provision of facilities essential for outdoor sport and recreation..
- 6.4 With regard to the development plan policies, the proposed change of Use can be considered as appropriate development.
- 6.5 Whilst policy D/1-10 predates the National Planning Policy Framework, it is consistent with the Framework in that it promotes the use of Green Belt for outdoor sport and recreation. The NPPF states once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land. The NPPF also allow for the provision of new buildings that provide appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and for engineering operations provided that they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in Green Belt.
- 6.6 With regard to both UDP policies D/1-10 and the Framework it is considered that the proposals to provide a new clubhouse comprising of a two storey building essential for the golf course and membership, are considered as appropriate development within the Green Belt.
- 6.7 Minor Engineering works would be required to create the supporting base for the new clubhouse and extended car park, which are not considered as inappropriate provided they preserve the openness of the Green Belt in accordance with NPPF
- 6.8 The main purpose of the Green Belt in this location is to safeguard the countryside from encroachment, with openness an essential characteristic. Appropriate development by definition must therefore retain the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.9 Whilst openness means the absence of buildings or development, low key essential development associated with the provision of outdoor sport is capable of retaining the

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open character of Green Belt. In this instance, the proposed building would comprise of a two storey building associated with the golf course, which would be located in the south western corner of the site, which is essential to the operation of the golf course, and of a height and scale that would preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

6.10 In addition to the new building the proposals it would also require engineering works to create the extension to the existing car park.

6.11 In an era of declining memberships, lower participation levels and increased closures golf clubs. it is important that Whittaker Golf Club continues with investing and growing to sustain their market place and hopefully grow.

The club have also planted between 20 and 25 thousand new trees over the whole course, making it a much more attractive course and support the local wildlife, and will continue to do so as the club develops.

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