

**GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT FOR PLANNING APPLICATION AT MOTO BIRCH EASTBOUND, LANCASHIRE
FOR THE RETENTION OF ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING HUB WITH ASSOCIATED WORKS
PLANNING PORTAL REFERENCE: PP-12866905
APRIL 2024**

On behalf of the applicant, The Electric Highway Company Ltd (GRIDSERVE), please see below a short green belt assessment appropriate for the size and scale of the development subject to this planning application.

The Site

The site forms part of the Birch Eastbound Motorway Service Station which is located between Junctions 18 and 19 of the M62. The application site itself is located within the existing car park and an area of former landscaping bound by the wider Motorway Service Station. The main building is located nearby, to the northeast of the hub and a Travelodge is located on the other side of the car park to the northwest. Beyond that is a HGV parking area and BP garage. The immediate area surrounding the site is formed of hardstanding and landscaping around the car park.

According to the Councils Planning Policy Map, the site is within an identified existing developed site in the Green Belt.

The Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for the retention of an electric vehicle charging hub (EV Hub) and associated works. Development work on a new EV Hub at the site commenced in November 2023 in order to meet the Government strategy for charging at motorway service areas and avoid operational delays. As constructed, the EV Hub provides 12no. charging bays including 2no. oversized bays which cater for users needing additional space to manoeuvre around their vehicle. The associated equipment comprises 12no. T175/350 high power charging upstands along with power cabinets, a packaged substation and SCADA cabinet.

Planning Policy

Under Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, all development decisions should be made in accordance with the relevant development plan policies, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

National Planning Policy

The current national planning policy guidance for making decisions in England is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023).

Section 13 relates to protecting green belt land. Paragraph 152 states that inappropriate development should not be approved within the green belt unless special circumstances exist. Paragraph 155 goes on to state that there are certain forms of developments that are not inappropriate within the green belt providing that its openness is preserved. These include local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a green belt location.

Local Planning Policy

The application site is located within the administrative boundary of Rochdale Borough Council. The Local Development Plan relevant to this application comprises the Places for Everyone Plan adopted March 2024, Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted in June 2006 and the Rochdale Local Plan Core Strategy (CS), adopted in October 2016. The relevant policies relating to Green Belt are:

- UDP Policy G/D/2 – Green Belt
- UDP Policy D/4 – Control of Development in the Green Belt - General
- UDP Policy D/5 – Infilling at Major Existing Developed Sites in the Green Belt
- CS Policy G4 – Protecting Green Belt

Planning Assessment

The application seeks planning permission for the retention of an EV Hub with associated equipment to meet the immediate charging needs of motorists using the M62. The EV Hub is located within the confines of the existing Motorway Service Station which is identified on the councils planning policies map as being an identified existing developed site in the Green Belt. UDP Policy D/4 states that

“Within the Green Belt approval will not be given, except in very special circumstances, for the erection of new buildings unless it is for the following purposes [...] d) Limited infilling or redevelopment of major, existing developed sites identified under, and in accordance with, Policy D/5.”

UDP Policy D/5 goes on to set out the circumstances where limited infilling at the major existing developed sites in the Green Belt will be permitted. As set out in the submission the development is related to the continuing use of the site by providing facilities for those visiting the Motorway Service Station to charge their electric vehicles. It is clearly contained within the boundary of the site as shown on the Proposal Map and has no greater impact upon the purposes of including the land in the Green Belt than the existing development, given its scale, size and ancillary nature to the overall use of the site as a Motorway Service Station. Further, it does not lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site and the heights of the equipment installed are clearly below that of the existing buildings on site. As such, the development is wholly in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusions

Overall, the development does not alter the openness of the Green Belt and can be considered to be local transport infrastructure that requires a Green Belt location. Further the development would accord with the circumstances set out in IDP Policy D/5 that allows development within the Green Belt at Birch Motorway Service Station. In addition, the provision of the EV Hub will help to address climate change and meet local and national objectives.

The development meets with the policy aims of the NPPF set out in paragraphs 152 and 155 and it also accords with the Development Plan including IDP Policies G/D/2 (Green Belt) and D/5 (Infilling at Major Existing Developed Sites in the Green Belt) and Core Strategy Policy G4 (Protecting Green Belt) by providing local transport infrastructure in a highly accessible location, at a major developed site within the Green Belt where appropriate infilling development is permitted, that helps to facilitate sustainable transport and in turn, reduce carbon emissions to help reduce the impacts of climate change.