

Planning Statement

For Elle R Leisure Ltd | 23-166

Wolstenholme Hall, Edenfield Road, Norden, Rochdale, OL12 7TT

Project: 23-166
Site Address: Wolstenholme Hall, Edenfield Road, Norden, Rochdale, OL12 7TT
Client: Elle R Leisure Ltd
Date: 08 June 2023
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Appendices

- EP1.** Plan of car parking at Albert's, Standish
- EP2.** Assessment of car park location alternatives
- EP3.** 1929 site plan



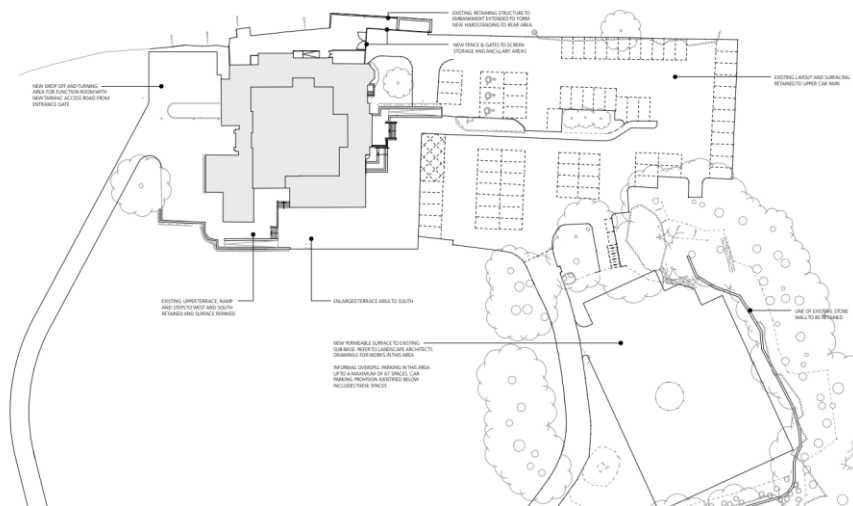
1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a planning application submitted on behalf of Elle R Leisure for the proposed demolition of existing extensions, the construction of new extensions to the existing restaurant, an internal access road and the creation of additional car parking and associated works at Wolstenholme Hall, Edenfield Road, Norden, Rochdale.
- 1.2 This application seeks revisions to planning permission 22/00597/FUL which was approved on 27th January 2023 for the demolition of existing extensions and the constructions of new extensions together with the creation of additional parking.
- 1.3 The proposal comprises the demolition of existing incongruous extensions and the construction of new extensions to provide a bar, restaurant, function room and private dining venue. The accommodation would be reconfigured internally and refurbished to a high quality. An extension of the existing car park is proposed to the south. A detailed description of development is provided in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Jonathan Davidson Architects.
- 1.4 The approved application proposed a gross new build external floorspace for the restaurant area and function room of 651.3.3 sqm. After the demolition of the existing extensions, this equated to an uplift in floorspace of 368.7 sqm. The current application proposes a gross new build external floorspace of 192.2 sqm, which equates to an uplift of 47.9 sqm following the demolition of the existing extensions.
- 1.5 The additional overflow car parking would remain as per the approved scheme and would comprise the provision of a grasscrete surface to an existing area of hardstanding in a location that has historically been used for car parking but has in recent years grassed over. A new access road would broadly follow the route of the original access to the Hall.
- 1.6 In approving planning permission 22/00597/FUL, the local planning authority concluded that the proposed extensions would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and would comply with policy in the development plan. In terms of the car park, the local planning authority concluded that the development would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt but that there were very special circumstances to outweigh the harm. This statement will demonstrate that the same conclusion should be reached in respect of the revised proposals.



2. The application

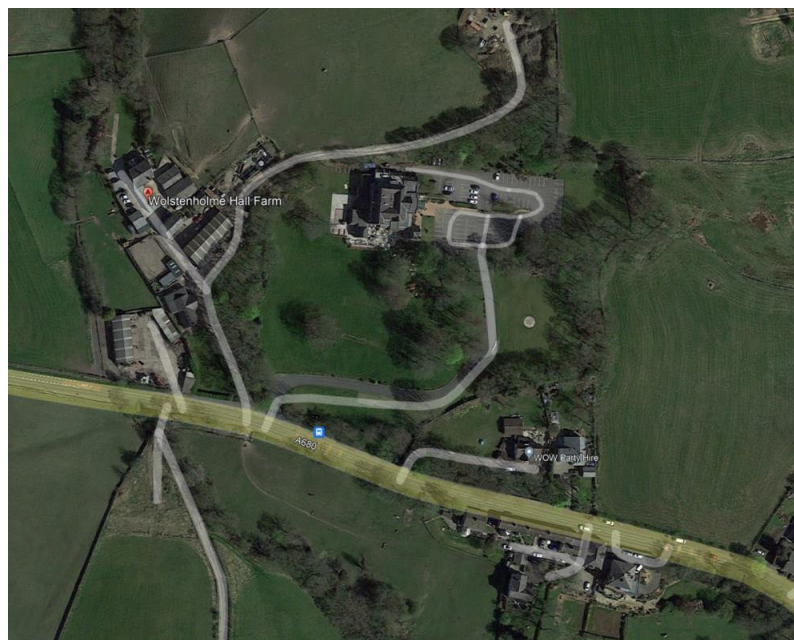
- 2.1 The application proposes the demolition of existing extensions, the construction of new extensions to the existing restaurant, an internal access road and the creation of additional car parking.
- 2.2 The Design and Access Statement accompanying this application explains that the proposed scheme comprises the demolition of part of the ground floor extensions and the replacement of these with a new winter garden extension to the south and east together with associated terracing and external works.
- 2.3 The proposals are on a substantially reduced footprint to that approved in January 2023 primarily due to the restaurant and bar areas being moved within the existing building and the number and capacity of the private function spaces being reduced. A detailed description of development is set out in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Jonathan Davidson Architects.
- 2.4 As with the approved scheme, the application also proposes additional parking to the south of the existing car park. This land was previously utilised as an overflow car park prior to Nutters operating from the site. The area had grassed over but the hardcore is present on site. The additional car parking area would be sensitively created using a grasscrete surface with no formal car park layout. The proposed overflow car park would be ancillary to the primary use of the site as a bar, restaurant, function room and private dining venue.
- 2.5 A new internal access road is provided which would provide a dedicated drop-off and pick-up point for the function room for use by the bride.
- 2.6 An extract of the proposed site layout is included below:



3. Context

Site location and description

- 3.1 The site extends to approximately 0.8 hectares and is situated in the Green Belt to the north of the A680 and to the north west of Norden. The site consists of Wolstenholme Hall and its curtilage and comprises previously developed land.
- 3.2 Wolstenholme Hall was built in 1850 by George Goodwin of Staffordshire as a gothic style private home. The main Hall is set over three storeys and is constructed of Staffordshire brick with a blue slate roof.
- 3.3 It is understood to have been used as a hospital from around 1920 until the late 1970s. It was then used as a nightclub until 1988. The building stood vacant for 4 years before being purchased by Whitbread for a restaurant. In 2003, it was purchased by Rodney Nutter and its use continued as a restaurant and events venue until 2021.
- 3.4 The area of the site proposed for the additional carparking is on the site of the helicopter landing pad. The helicopter landing pad has been on site since at least 2013 according to Google Aerial photographs and can be seen on the aerial photograph below:



4. Relevant planning history

4.1 Relevant planning history is summarised in the table below:

	Proposal	Decision	Decision Date
22/00597/FUL	Erection of extensions to side elevations, alterations to fenestration on existing front elevation at first floor, new raised terrace area to front, formation of overspill car park and other associated works following demolition of existing extensions to front and side elevations	Granted with conditions	27 th January 2023
05/D45272	Single storey rear extension to restaurant	Granted with conditions	10/06/2005
04/D443773	Single storey side extension to restaurant	Withdrawn	14/12/2004
88/D22117	Refurbishment and Extensions	Granted with conditions	18/08/1988
87/D21030	Change of use from Licenced Premises to Nursing/Rest Home	Granted with conditions	05/11/1987
87/D21029	Two storey extension	Granted with conditions	05/11/1987
83/D14881	Single storey side extension	Granted with conditions	17/03/1983



80/D11010	Toilets and Beer Store in connection with conversion to licenced club, public bars and restaurant	Granted with conditions	10/07/1980
80/D10888	O/A – Residential Development	Refused	22/09/1980
80/D11160	Extension to premises to form Terrace Bar and Public Rooms	Granted with conditions	22/09/1980
80/D11257	Alterations and extensions to premises	Granted with conditions	22/09/1980
79/D08013	O/A Residential Development – 12 Detached Dwellings	Refused	18/06/1979
79/D08169	Conversion of former hospital into restaurant and disco with 26 bedroom residential accommodation including swimming pool and 4 squash courts	Granted with conditions	18/06/1979

Consultation and background

- 4.2 Prior to the submission of the first planning application, a pre-application enquiry was submitted in September 2021 for demolition of existing extensions and construction of new extensions at the site (reference PREAPP/00137/21). No objections were raised to the principle of development.



5. Policy context

- 5.1 Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development plan context

- 5.2 The Rochdale Local Plan comprises the Core Strategy (October 2016) and the saved policies of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (June 2006). The site is situated in the Green Belt to the North West of the defined settlement boundary of Norden as shown on the extract from the proposals map below:



- 5.3 Relevant policies from the Core Strategy comprise:

- E2: Increasing jobs and prosperity
- E5: Encouraging the visitor economy
- E6: Supporting and diversifying the rural economy
- P1: Improving image
- P2: Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
- P3: Improving design of new development
- G4: Protecting Green Belt
- G7: Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity



- G9: Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability
- T2: Improving access
- DM1: General Development Requirements

5.4 Relevant policies from the UDP comprise:

- G/D/2: Green Belt
- D/4: Control of development in the Green Belt

Other material considerations

Places for Everyone Plan

5.5 Places for Everyone (PfE) is a joint Development Plan Document being produced by nine Greater Manchester districts (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan). Once adopted, PfE will be the overarching development plan, setting the policy framework for individual district Local Plans. The Inspector's preliminary findings are currently awaited. Little weight can be attached to the PfE in the decision making process at the present time.

National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) (2021)

5.6 The Framework states that there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision taking, this means approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay.

5.7 Key sections of the Framework are:

- 2. Achieving sustainable development
- 4. Decision-making
- 12. Achieving well-designed places
- 13. Protecting Green Belt land



6. Planning considerations: Green Belt

Appropriateness of development – extensions

6.1 The committee report for planning application 22/00597/FUL concluded that:

“...the LPA are satisfied that the proposed development would not result in a ‘disproportionate addition’ over and above the size of the building as it existed on 1st July 1948. As such the extensions to the building would fall within the exception to inappropriate development as identified in paragraph 149 c) of the NPPF”

6.2 A summary of the relevant floor space for the original building, the existing building and the proposed extensions is provided in the tables below. These figures have been provided by the applicant’s architect and are internal measurements. Please note that the figures for the original building are an estimate as accurate floorplans are not available.

	Floor space	% Increase above original building
Original dwelling (main Hall and hospital wing)	2,392 m ²	N/A
Existing building	1,726 m ²	-28%
Extensions approved by planning permission 22/00597/FUL	2,090 m ²	-13%
Application proposals	1,764 m ²	-26%

6.3 As can be seen from the table above, the proposed extensions would result in a 26% decrease in floor space when compared to the original building. Given the scale and reduction of the floor space proposed there would be no adverse impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The proposal would not result in a disproportionate addition to the original building and is therefore not inappropriate development in the Green Belt.



Appropriateness of development: car park and access road

6.4 Paragraph 150 of the Framework states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate development in the 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
- The re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction.
- Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds; and
- Development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

6.5 In this case, the proposal involves providing a new tarmac internal access road and a grasscrete surface to an existing area of hardstanding to be used for car parking. This area has historically been used for car parking but has in recent years grassed over, i.e. an engineering operation. The below extract from a 2003 map shows a defined outline of the area historically used for additional parking.



- 6.6 There is no change of use involved as the access road and proposed car park is within the curtilage of Wolstenholme Hall (although this could be appropriate development in any event). Furthermore, the proposal involves the provision of local transport infrastructure. The car parking is an integral part of an application for the proposed alterations to Wolstenholme Hall in order to bring the building back into good use. It is considered therefore that a requirement for a Green Belt location can be demonstrated.
- 6.7 The proposal is one that falls within two of the categories listed in paragraph 150 of the Framework and can comprise appropriate development provided it preserves openness and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

Impact on openness of the Green Belt

- 6.8 There is no definition set out through policy or law as to what openness should comprise, and there is no standard methodology as to assessing impact.
- 6.9 As derived from the judgments in *Turner* and *Eurogarages* (see extracts in previous section), the word “openness” is open-textured and a number of factors are capable of being relevant when it comes to applying it to the particular facts of a specific case. Prominent among these will be factors relevant to how built up the Green Belt is now, and how built up the Green Belt would be if redevelopment occurs (in the context of which, volumetric matters may be a material concern, but are by no means the only one) and factors relevant to the visual impact on the aspect of openness which the Green Belt presents. The decision-maker must consider whether there is ‘harm’ (not merely change) to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 6.10 The PPG at paragraph 64-001 advises that:

“Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects – in other words, the visual impact of the proposal may be relevant, as could its volume.”

- 6.11 An assessment of the spatial and visual impacts is provided below:

Spatial impact

- 6.12 In terms of spatial impact, there is no volume created as a result of the proposed access road and car park and there would be no loss of openness in this regard.

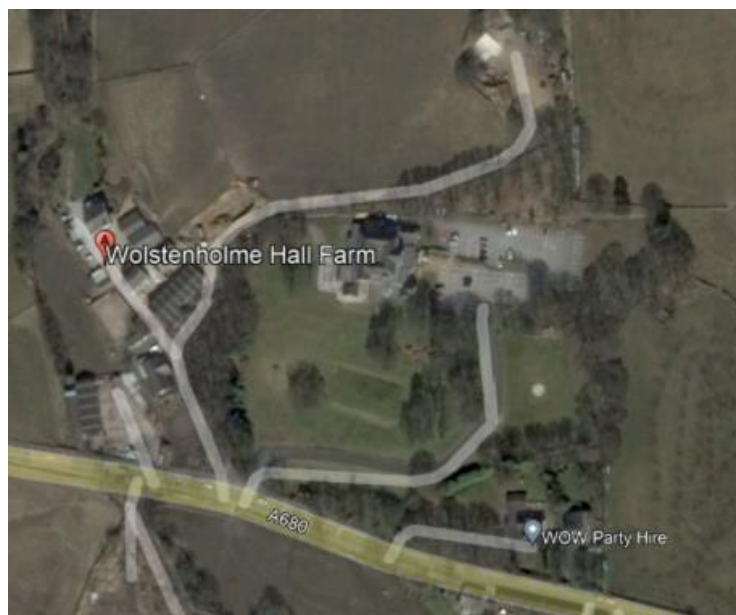


Visual impact

- 6.13 In terms of visual impact, it is necessary to look specifically at this site and how it fits into its wider context. The site forms part of a previously developed site and is situated within a group of buildings to the south, west and north.
- 6.14 The proposed new access road would broadly follow the line of the original access to the previous front of the Hall.
- 6.15 There would be no material alteration to the profile of the land or any change in levels by providing a grasscrete finish to an area previously used as car parking and laid to hardstanding. The existing topographical survey of the land (drawing reference S23175-T) showing the existing levels and the external works site plan (366 CD 9005 T2) showing the proposed site levels are enclosed with the application and confirm that there is no change in levels proposed.
- 6.16 The landscape plan prepared by DEP Landscape Architecture (001 Rev 01) shows that the surface of the car park would be grasscrete, which would be seeded in the circulation space and filled with decorative gravel in the car parking spaces. The proposed finish would be rural in character and consistent with its proposed use as an overflow car park. The landscape plan also shows the existing trees to be retained and a woodland hedge planting mix around the perimeter of the car park within which the acoustic fence would be screened. There would be no extension into the Green Belt beyond the existing defined curtilage and the site is screened by vegetation.
- 6.17 The site has historically been used for car parking. Although it is accepted that it has grassed over in recent years, the hardstanding still remains below the surface. We would caveat that this is not presented as a fallback position but simply a matter of historical fact and context (there is no suggestion from the applicant that permission is not required). It is correct to say that vehicles associated with Wolstenholme Hall could park on the grass without the need for planning permission, however this is not presented as a fallback position.
- 6.18 This part of the site was last used for helicopter landing and parking in connection with the Hall and the pad has been on site since at least 2013 based on aerial photographs.
- 6.19 The additional car parking would be overflow parking. It is the furthest distance from the Hall and it is only likely to be used once the main car park adjacent to the Hall is full. The extent of the use of this area would be less intensive than the main car park. This is reflected in the proposed material i.e. grasscrete rather than formal hardstanding. Any 'urbanizing' effect of vehicles parking on the land will be much less frequent and intensive than the main car park.



6.20 In terms of lights and noise, we would reiterate that this is an overflow parking area which would be used much less frequently than the main car park resulting in a reduction in use of lights and noise in comparison with the main car park. It was also last used, and has a lawful use, as helicopter landing pad which would have also resulted in an 'urbanising effect' through lights and noise. It is accepted that there is no planning history for the helicopter landing pad. However, the helicopter landing pad is clearly visible on historic Google Earth images dating from 2013. As the helicopter landing pad was ancillary to the primary use of the site, the relevant time period for enforcement action would be 4 years for operational development. The absence of a Lawful Development Certificate or planning permission does not mean that the development is not lawful. The historic aerial photographs provide sufficient evidence for this to be a material consideration in the determination of the application. We provide the aerials from 2013 and 2018 below.



Google Earth image 5.4.2013





Google Earth image 19.4.2018

- 6.21 Finally, the applicant would provide a landscaping scheme to further enclose the site and ensure it is acceptable from a visual perspective.
- 6.22 Having regard to the context of the site, the above considerations and relevant case law, it is considered that the proposal maintains the openness of the area.
- 6.23 Referring back to the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open and to protect the countryside, it is not considered that harm would be caused to the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt as set out at paragraph 80 of the Framework:
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas – the proposal would have no impact in this regard.
 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another – the proposal would not cause or contribute to the merging of any towns.
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment – the proposal would be contained within the curtilage of the previously developed site and there would be no encroachment into the countryside.
 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns – there would be no impact on the setting and special character of historic towns.
 - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land - there would be no harm caused to urban regeneration initiatives elsewhere. Furthermore, the proposal is an integral part of a proposal to bring a vacant site back into good use.

- 6.24 In summary, we conclude that the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing. There would be no harm to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 6.25 However, should the local planning authority conclude as they did in respect of the approved scheme that there would be an adverse impact on openness, then there are other considerations that should be afforded significant weight in the decision making process and together comprise very special circumstances. These remain the same as the approved scheme and are set out in section 8 below. Before assessing the very special circumstances, we assess the other planning considerations to ascertain whether there is any other harm to appraise in the Green Belt balance.



7. Other planning considerations

Heritage and design

- 7.1 Wolstenholme Hall is identified as a non-designated heritage asset. The key consideration from a heritage perspective is the impact on the setting of the asset.
- 7.2 Section 16 of the Framework considers heritage planning. Paragraph 197 identifies four key areas that need to be addressed in the decision-making process as follows:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

- 7.3 Clearly in this case, as a non-designated asset, Wolstenholme Hall is of local importance, and it is highly desirable to identify a long term viable use for the site.

- 7.4 Paragraph 203 of the Framework goes on to state that:

“The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset..”

- 7.5 The Heritage Statement accompanying the application makes the following key points:

- Wolstenholme Hall’s most significant historic interest lies in its association with a prominent member of the local and wider community and its communal value as a substantial and widely regarded local building and landmark (paragraph 5.2.2).
- Overall, the building is of medium significance, whilst the additions are of low to neutral or intrusive value (paragraph 6.3).
- The extensions and alterations are not considered to be causative of harm in terms of impact on the building’s architectural interest and its setting is preserved and merely changed by the proposals (8.3.7)
- The internal alterations, on balance, cannot be considered harmful. Their purpose of providing the building with a commercially viable future contributes to its ongoing presence, maintaining its architectural interest (paragraph 8.5.2).



7.6 In summarising the impact, it stated at paragraphs 9.4 and 9.5 that:

“The proposals are consistent with the objectives as set out in local planning policy in terms of demonstrably preserving and enhancing the special architectural, artistic, historic and archaeological significance of a non-designated heritage asset.

Whilst this document contends that the proposals are not causative of harm to the building’s significance, it is acknowledged to be a subjective opinion and, on that basis, it is further contended that any perceived harm is decisively outweighed by the benefits of the proposals when considering the contribution of the building’s ongoing viability and importance as a local heritage asset.”

7.7 In respect of the approved scheme, the committee report states:

“The Conservation Officer concludes that the level of harm caused to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset would be minor. When assessing this level of harm against guidance in the NPPF it is recognised that there must be a balanced judgement regarding the scale of this harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

On balance, given the enhancement to the building that would be accrued through the removal of the extensions at the site and the benefits that would be brought through continued use of the site as a restaurant, it is not considered that the level of harm to the non-designated heritage asset would be significant enough to warrant a refusal. As such, subject to conditions requiring details of materials, it is considered that the two extensions to the building are acceptable in terms of visual amenity and heritage.”

7.8 This application proposes an amended scheme which has been scaled back from that approved earlier this year. It is considered that the same conclusions can be reached in terms of design and heritage. It would not cause harm to the significance of Wolstenholme Hall and is consistent with the objectives set out in paragraph 185 of the NPPF.

7.9 Should it be concluded that harm has taken place, then the benefits presented as part of the original application remain and are also relevant. The proposal would enhance the significance of the heritage asset through exposing features currently hidden by the existing extensions, and the new additions respect the historic fabric of Wolstenholme Hall. The long-term viability of the non-designated heritage asset would also be secured and would help sustain its significance in accordance with the Framework and maintain its value as a substantial and widely regarded local building and landmark. As identified in the Heritage Impact Assessment, much of the historic interest of the building lies in its communal value, therefore bringing this asset back into use for the benefit of the local and wider community carries significant weight.

7.10 Having regard to the Core Strategy, Policy P2 strives to protect the borough’s heritage through conserving, enhancing and utilising other non-statutory heritage assets of local interest, be they buildings, parks,



gardens or archaeological sites, including promoting their sensitive restoration. The proposals would comply with Policy P2.

Archaeology

- 7.11 A Desk Based Assessment carried out by Archeological Research Services Ltd has been submitted in support of the proposals. It has found that the building has *“evidential and illustrative value in the understanding the individual evolution, decline and development from the former Wolstenholme Hall to its current manifestation during the late-19th to 20th centuries”*. Overall, it has been assessed that any above ground hidden or surviving below ground archaeological assets would be of local and regional significance.
- 7.12 The report concludes that the development may have an impact upon hidden or unrecorded heritage assets relating to the former Wolstenholme Hall through demolition and groundworks. However, it is considered that there is a low archaeological potential for surviving below-ground foundations for vernacular buildings, landscaped features or former field boundaries relating to the 19th century agricultural land use to be still present.
- 7.13 It is finally recommended that level 2 to 3 Historic Building Recording be undertaken to record original features relating to the former Wolstenholme Hall and to determine and analyse the different phases which the hall has manifested. Further recommendations for an intra-demolition structural watch brief and archaeological monitoring are also included in order to record any hidden architectural fabric or surviving below ground features, if present. We consider that this could be an informative on the planning permission, as was the case with the earlier permission.

Drainage and flood risk

- 7.14 The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is not considered to be at risk of flooding.
- 7.15 Surface water will be discharged through the reuse of the existing connection to the combined water sewer. To dispose of foul water, a new foul water drainage network is to be constructed around the restaurant building and outfall to the existing combined water drainage serving the current site, and outfalling to the combined water sewer. No objection was raised in respect of drainage for the approved scheme.



Noise

- 7.16 Wolstenholme Hall has operated as a restaurant for over 20 years and was previously a night club, therefore the existing noise levels have been long established and are not considered to affect the amenity of the surrounding residential properties. The site is in a rural location with a small number of residential properties in the vicinity.
- 7.17 A Noise Impact Assessment has been provided with the application which has assessed four key areas:
- Amplified music noise breaking out of the proposed site
 - Patron noise in the external areas
 - Background music within the external patron areas
 - Noise from fixed external plant equipment
- 7.18 The noise emissions from the development have been assessed against the specified acoustic design criteria and a noise mitigation scheme has been provided. The report recommends an action plan in order to achieve the lowest observed adverse effect level.

Highways

Car parking

- 7.19 It is proposed to provide additional parking for approximately 67 south of the existing car park, on an area of the site historically used as overflow car parking.
- 7.20 Overall, including the existing parking space the proposal would include 141 parking spaces, of which 3 are disabled spaces. There are also 8 cycle spaces and 2 motorcycle spaces. The proposed car park is screened by trees to the north, south and east, with access from the drive to the west.
- 7.21 Highways Services did not consider that there were any undue highway safety concerns associated with the approved scheme and the same conclusion should be reached in respect of this revised scheme.

Access

- 7.22 A secondary drive is proposed to the west of the site to serve the function rooms during weddings or other events. which may require private access to the venue for brides or key guests.
- 7.23 The proposed drive would broadly follow the route of the original access to the Hall and would be accessed from the existing access track. It will therefore not impact upon the existing access arrangements from Edenfield Road.



Ecology

- 7.24 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Bat Survey was carried out by Rachel Hacking Ecology and is submitted in support of this application.
- 7.25 The development site was found to offer limited ecological value, whilst the wider estate offers higher value habitats. Any habitats affected by the proposal are considered to be of limited ecological value and no mitigation is required in this respect.
- 7.26 Scattered bat droppings were located on the second-floor and loft void and further surveys as part of the proposal have been recommended to confirm bat presence/absence. No impact is envisaged to any trees with Potential Roosting Features and the proposal does not affect any suitable bat foraging or community habitat.
- 7.27 No further protected species were found within the development site, or within 30m and the proposal would not have an impact on any protected sites. Rhododendron and Cotoneaster have been found on site and removal is recommended, with appropriate mitigation measures recommended for nesting birds.

Trees

- 7.28 Most of the trees within the site will be retained, however the Arboricultural Survey prepared by DEP Landscape Architecture recommends a number of trees to be removed, with the majority in very poor condition and some affected by the proposal being within Root Protection Areas (RPAs). The report outlines mitigation measures, such as hand excavation and root pruning for some of the affected RPAs. Overall, the report finds that “this development has minimal impact on surrounding trees and there is plenty of opportunity to mitigate any losses and improve the tree population as a whole”.

Ground conditions

- 7.29 The submitted Phase I Site Investigation or Preliminary Risk Assessment prepared by Groundtech Consulting has found *low* risk to human health and controlled waters. The risk from ground gases has been identified as *moderate to high* and basic radon precautions are required within the proposed development.
- 7.30 With regard to coal mining, there is low risk from recorded mine workings and entries, however there is potential for unrecorded shallow and mine entries, for which the risk is *moderate*. The report also makes a number of recommendations in relation to ground engineering works and considers a main investigation will be required.



7.31 The submitted report was considered acceptable for the last application and there is no change in this regard.

Climate Change

7.32 Policy GC1 aims to address climate change and ensure growth does not increase CO2 emissions. The policy also promotes the efficient re-use of buildings, especially those of heritage value. The proposals relate to the re-use of a vacant restaurant within a non-designated heritage asset with the aim of securing a viable future for the building.

7.33 The submitted Energy Statement demonstrates that the proposed development will aim to achieve reduces CO2 emissions through:

- Reducing U-values of the building's thermal elements.
- Reducing the effects of thermal bridging.
- Effective airtightness and ventilation strategies.
- Consideration of services installations efficiency improvements.

7.34 A further low and zero carbon feasibility study will also be carried out to assess the future use of low and zero carbon technologies. On the basis of the submitted report, there is no conflict with Core Strategy Policies G1 and G2.



8. Very special circumstances

- 8.1 Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, are clearly outweighed by other considerations. In essence there is a requirement to assess the harm resulting from the proposal, outline and assess the other considerations and undertake a balancing exercise whereby the harm caused by the proposal is weighed against the other considerations. If the other considerations clearly outweigh the harm, this comprises the very special circumstances required to justify granting planning permission.
- 8.2 The NPPF does not prescribe or define the scope of very special circumstances. The weight to be given to very special circumstances is therefore dependent upon the context of each individual case. However, case law has also determined that the circumstances do not need to be unusual or specific to the particular case to be special.
- 8.3 There are considerations in favour of the development proposals, which should be afforded significant weight in the decision-making process as such that they outweigh the definitional harm and the very limited harm which may be caused to the openness of the Green Belt should the local planning authority reach this conclusion. The local planning authority also considers that there is minor harm to the non-designated heritage asset. The assessment below demonstrates that the planning considerations in favour of the development proposals amount to the very special circumstances in which planning permission can be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 8.4 The considerations that comprise the very special circumstances in this case are as follows:
- Securing a viable future for the building;
 - The need for the car park and access road;
 - An assessment of alternatives demonstrating this is the most appropriate location for the car park;
 - Securing and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset;
 - Contribution to the local economy;
 - The historic use of the site; and,
 - The reduction in the size of the extensions.



Securing a viable future for the building

- 8.5 Wolstenholme Hall has previously been a successful site operating as a restaurant and events venue. Trade declined at the restaurant over the last 5 years and at the time of purchase by the applicant, the site was in need of significant investment. The business was vacated by Nutters in 2021 and is now empty. The Hall has been subject to vandalism, with roof tiles stripped and windows smashed. Rochdale Council building control services have advised the applicant that the building is in a dangerous condition. The condition of the building will decline rapidly as it is no longer watertight. There is an urgent need to secure planning permission to enable the building to be brought back into good use. Wolstenholme Hall is also identified as a non-designated heritage asset which makes it even more important to secure a long term viable use for the site.
- 8.6 The proposed restaurant operates a different business model to the no longer viable Nutters restaurant. The number of car parking spaces proposed are essential for the business and are commensurate with those approved on other Albert's sites e.g. Standish. The additional car park is an integral part of the proposals and is necessary in order for the venture to be viable.
- 8.7 The applicant is a Manchester based property and leisure business, Castlefield Estates Limited, the property development arm and Elle R Leisure Limited, which operates leisure activities from sites acquired and developed by Castlefield Estates. The portfolio currently consists of a range of offices, restaurants, bars and hotels across Manchester, Leeds and North Wales. The business is family owned and operated with the emphasis on longevity. The business makes significant capital investment into all its sites with a view to retaining ownership and obtaining returns over a longer period. Profits are retained in the businesses to develop new sites and the company does not rely on bank financing for acquisition or development.
- 8.8 Castlefield Estates originally started in Castlefield in the centre of Manchester in the late 1980's and has helped develop the area into the vibrant community that it is today. This has included developing a number of historically significant buildings in a sympathetic manner and bringing them back into a commercially viable use.
- 8.9 Elle R Leisure sought to exploit the leisure potential of such a historic area, and so Dukes 92 was opened in September 1991. The site was further developed over the coming years to include events spaces and finally with the opening of Albert's Shed in 2004. This created a large multi-purpose destination site incorporating a bar, restaurant and events space. The company has continued the brand development with the opening of three other sites, Albert's Didsbury, Worsley and Standish. Wolstenholme Hall would operate under the Albert's brand.



- 8.10 The company trademark is to regenerate derelict or underperforming sites and bring them back into vibrant spaces with high quality multi use schemes.
- 8.11 There is a need to seek a viable use to secure the future of the site and the heritage asset. The applicant has a proven track record of delivering a successful restaurant and bar model to sites that had become unviable under previous ownership. The car park and access road are an integral part of the proposal to secure the viable use. This is material consideration to which significant weight should be attached.

Need for the car park and access road

- 8.12 As set out above, Nutters operated a fine dining model based on a low number of covers which required significantly less parking than the previous operators of the site who relied on the overflow car park. Alberts operates a restaurant alongside function rooms.
- 8.13 The size of the car park proposed is consistent with other sites operated by Albert's. We attach at Appendix **EP1** a plan for the car parking at Albert's, Standish where there are 150 car parking spaces, compared with 142 at Wolstenholme Hall.
- 8.14 The overflow car park is just that, for the busiest times when the restaurant and all three function rooms are in use. Customers will typically seek to park as close to the venue as possible and therefore the overflow car park would only be used at times when the main car park is full.
- 8.15 In terms of the access road, it is important that there is a dedicated access for the function room. The previously designed extension provided a designated access to the main function room. The revised scheme has been considerably scaled back and no longer provides this opportunity. The access road enables a dedicated drop off and pick up point for the bride and key guests.

Assessment of alternatives

- 8.16 The local planning authority has also questioned whether alternative locations have been considered for the overflow car park particularly the land to the east of the existing car park. An assessment has been undertaken and this is attached at Appendix **EP2**. In summary:
- Zone A comprises the open lawned area to the front of the property. It was considered that locating additional parking in this location would be detrimental to the main view and approach to the Hall.
 - Zone B is situated to the west of the existing building. Locating the additional car park in Zone B would involve the removal of a number of trees. Furthermore, there is no existing vehicular access to this part of the site and a new access road would be required (probably running through Zone A).



- Zone C is a steep embankment with heavy tree cover and does not lend itself to car parking.
- Zone D is the area suggested by the local planning authority situated to the east of the existing car park. This was the site for a former reservoir which is understood to lie beneath the surface of the ground, please see the site plan from 1929 attached at Appendix **EP3**. Significant engineering operations would be required to site the car park in this location.
- Zone E is the proposed location for the overflow car park. Historically this was host to a number of buildings. It has also been used for overflow parking the past and was last used as a helicopter landing pad.

8.17 Having carried out a site assessment, it is considered that Zone E is the only suitable location for the proposed overflow car park.

Securing and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset

8.18 Section 16 of the Framework considers heritage planning. Paragraph 197 identifies three key areas that need to be addressed in the decision-making process as follows:

- the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and,
- the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

8.19 Clearly in this case, as a non-designated asset, Wolstenholme Hall is of local importance, and it is highly desirable to identify a long-term viable use for the site.

8.20 The Hall has been significantly altered and the extensions are incongruous in relation to the main Hall. Demolishing these unsympathetic extensions and replacing them with high quality, functional extensions would be an enhancement to the original façade of the building. The improvement to the visual appearance and condition of the site would constitute a significant benefit.

8.21 The proposal would enhance the significance of the heritage asset through exposing features currently hidden by the existing extension, and the new additions respect the historic fabric of Wolstenholme Hall. The long-term viability of the non-designated heritage asset would also be secured and would help sustain its significance in accordance with the Framework and maintain its value as a substantial and widely regarded local building and landmark. As identified in the Heritage Impact Assessment, much of the historic interest of the building lies in its communal value, therefore bringing this asset back into use for the benefit of the local and wider community carries significant weight.



- 8.22 The proposal is needed to secure the long-term future of the building utilizing a high-quality design which will contribute towards the image of the borough. It would enhance the significance of the heritage asset and sustain it for future generations. This is a material consideration to which significant weight should be attached.

Contribution to the local economy

- 8.23 Elle R Leisure's business model is based around creating destination venues that justify significant long-term investment. Elle R Leisure operates a three-strand business model comprising restaurant, bar and events. The business model provides both a multitude of visitor opportunity and maximises spend per visit, for example encouraging guests to visit the bar for a drink before and after a meal.
- 8.24 The events strand of the commercial strategy forms an essential component and is a significant part of the revenue stream which justifies the proposed scale of investment at Wolstenholme.
- 8.25 In order to provide this model, as part of this application the applicant seeks consent for a similar sized building to comparable restaurants within its portfolio. The anticipated investment into the site including site acquisition costs is estimated at £5-6 million.
- 8.26 The customer base for the restaurant and bar would be drawn from the broadest possible age range. For example, midweek lunchtimes are popular with an older demographic and weekend days are family orientated with evening customers being drawn from the working age population. The business model seeks to draw customers from a wide catchment, often travelling up to 15 miles to a site.
- 8.27 To date Elle R Leisure has created over 500 jobs with a high level of staff retention. Working with local people and communities has always been a key part of its strategy with partnerships being key to supporting sustainable growth locally and for the business.
- 8.28 The business would seek to attract a significant number of visitors to the area and facilitate a boost to the economy of Rochdale. The site is well positioned on the highways network, close to the A680, M66 and M62 and able to attract passing trade from these major routes. Guests will typically use the facility for eating and drinking however customers may also undertake linked trips to nearby attractions.
- 8.29 Alberts', Worsley is comparable. This was a derelict pub on a large site with potential to create a destination venue. The New Ellesmere pub, which was closed when acquired, was redeveloped with the uses expanded from pure pub to restaurant, bar and events space. The site hosts approximately 150,000 covers annually.



- 8.30 The £3 million investment at the Worsley site provided an attractive destination venue which in turn created a number of enhancements to the local area and economy. It has led to the creation of approximately 80 jobs with strong staff retention and a large percentage of staff residing in the surrounding area. It is anticipated that a similar number of jobs would be created at Wolstenholme Hall.
- 8.31 Once planning permission has been obtained, the applicant would seek to implement the extension and refurbish the existing building. Elle R Leisure bring a proven track record and experience of developing and operating high quality and successful leisure sites. The company has a wealth of knowledge of developing quality environment, whether that be in the context of the Castlefield Estate or at the various leisure operations.
- 8.32 In summary, the contribution to the local economy would comprise:
- An estimated investment of £5-6 million.
 - Creation of approximately 80 jobs, with employees sought from the local area wherever possible.
 - Attraction of visitors to Rochdale and linked trips with tourist facilities.
- 8.33 The economic benefits are a material consideration to which significant weight should be attached.

The historic use of the site

- 8.34 As set out above, the historic use of the site is a material consideration in the overall planning balance.
- 8.35 The proposed overflow car parking area was historically used for car parking. Prior to the purchase of the site by Nutters in 2003, the site was used more intensively. The owner prior to 2003 was Whitbread who operated a high volume restaurant with childrens' indoor play (a Wacky Warehouse) and before that as a nightclub. This type of operation requires a high level of parking and the proposed hardstanding area was used as car parking prior to 2003.
- 8.36 This is clearly shown on the extract from a 2003 map included at paragraph 6.25 of our planning statement. The map at paragraph 6.25 was taken from the appendices to the preliminary risk assessment prepared by Groundtech. We would also refer you to the figures at Appendix V and the Groundsure Large-Scale Historic Map Report at Appendix VII of the Historic Environment Desk Based Assessment prepared by ARS and submitted as part of the application. These show the car park on maps dated between 1992 and 2003.
- 8.37 The Groundsure Maps at Appendix VII of the ARS report also clearly show that there were buildings on the site of the proposed car park in 1929, 1938, and 1963. There also appear to be buildings on this parcel of land as recently as 1983 to 1987.



8.38 Evidence of vehicular use can be seen on historic Google maps. Below are the images from 2000, 2003 and 2005 which show vehicular tracks on the ground.



Google Maps Image 2000



Google Maps Image 2003



Google Maps Image 2005

- 8.39 The restaurant was operated by Andrew Nutter from 2003 until October 2021 as a fine dining experience. This model has less reliance on car parking. The lower car park was no longer used and naturally grassed over. The hardstanding still remains below the surface. However, Mr Nutter did construct a helicopter landing pad on the area in question. This can be seen on Google Aerial images going back to 2013. We do not believe this had planning permission but would have become lawful through the passage of time. The helicopter landing pad would also be an engineering operation in the Green Belt.
- 8.40 In terms of the proposed internal access road, the maps from 1910, 1929, 1962-1963, 1969 in Appendix V referred to above, also show that the proposed internal access road follows the route of the original road very closely. Again, there is historic evidence that that was an existing road in this location.
- 8.41 In summary, the available evidence shows that there was built form on this site for many years and that there was a car park on the land between around 1992 and 2003 which has naturally grassed over. More recently the land has been used as a helicopter landing pad. The use of the site for car parking in conjunction with Wolstenholme Hall is entirely in-keeping with the historic use of the land and this is a material consideration to which moderate weight should be attached.

The reduction in size of the proposed extensions

- 8.42 The proposed extensions have been reduced from 2,090 sqm as approved to 1,764 sqm as now proposed. This is a reduction of 326sqm (gross internal area). The proposed new access road (which would not create any new floorspace or volume) is needed in order to achieve the reduction in scale and massing.

Summary of very special circumstances

- 8.43 The local planning authority concluded in respect of the previously approved scheme that:

“It is considered that there are very special circumstances that would clearly outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt in terms of inappropriateness and loss of openness. The economic investment in the site would secure the long term use of the building which would in turn contribute to the local economy and result in the creation of additional jobs in the local area. Investment in the site would also secure the long term future of the heritage asset, which has previously been harmed by inappropriate extensions and which is currently degrading due to its vacant nature. It is considered that the applicants have adequately demonstrated that the level of parking is required for the proposed development and it is considered that these matters would clearly outweigh the limited harm identified.

Very special circumstances exist that outweigh the substantial harm to Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and loss of openness. All other matters have been addressed and the recommendation is for approval.”

- 8.44 It is considered that the same conclusion can be reached in respect of the current proposals.



9. Summary

- 9.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a planning application submitted on behalf of Elle R Leisure for the proposed demolition of existing extensions, the construction of new extensions to the existing restaurant, an internal access road and the creation of additional car parking and associated works at Wolstenholme Hall, Edenfield Road, Norden, Rochdale.
- 9.2 This application seeks revisions to planning permission 22/00597/FUL which was approved on 27th January 2023 for the demolition of existing extensions and the constructions of new extensions together with the creation of additional parking.
- 9.3 The proposal comprises the demolition of existing incongruous extensions and the construction of new extensions to provide a bar, restaurant, function room and private dining venue. The accommodation would be reconfigured internally and refurbished to a high quality. A new internal access road is proposed together with the extension of the existing car park to the south.
- 9.4 The proposed extensions would not comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt. We conclude that the additional car parking and access road would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development. There would be no harm to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt and the proposal would not be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- 9.5 If the local planning authority conclude that the proposed car park and access road is inappropriate, there are considerations in favour of the development proposals. which should be taken into account in the decision-making process. The considerations are:
- Securing a viable future for the building;
 - The need for the access road and car park;
 - An assessment of alternatives demonstrating this is the most appropriate location for the car park;
 - Securing and enhancing the significance of the heritage asset;
 - Contribution to the local economy;
 - The historic use of the site; and,
 - The reduction in the scale of the proposed extensions.
- 9.6 These considerations should, together, be afforded significant weight in the decision-making process. It is considered they outweigh the definitional harm and the very limited harm which may be caused to the



openness of the Green Belt (should the local planning authority reach that conclusion), and consequently comprise the very special circumstances in which permission may be granted for development that is inappropriate in the Green Belt.



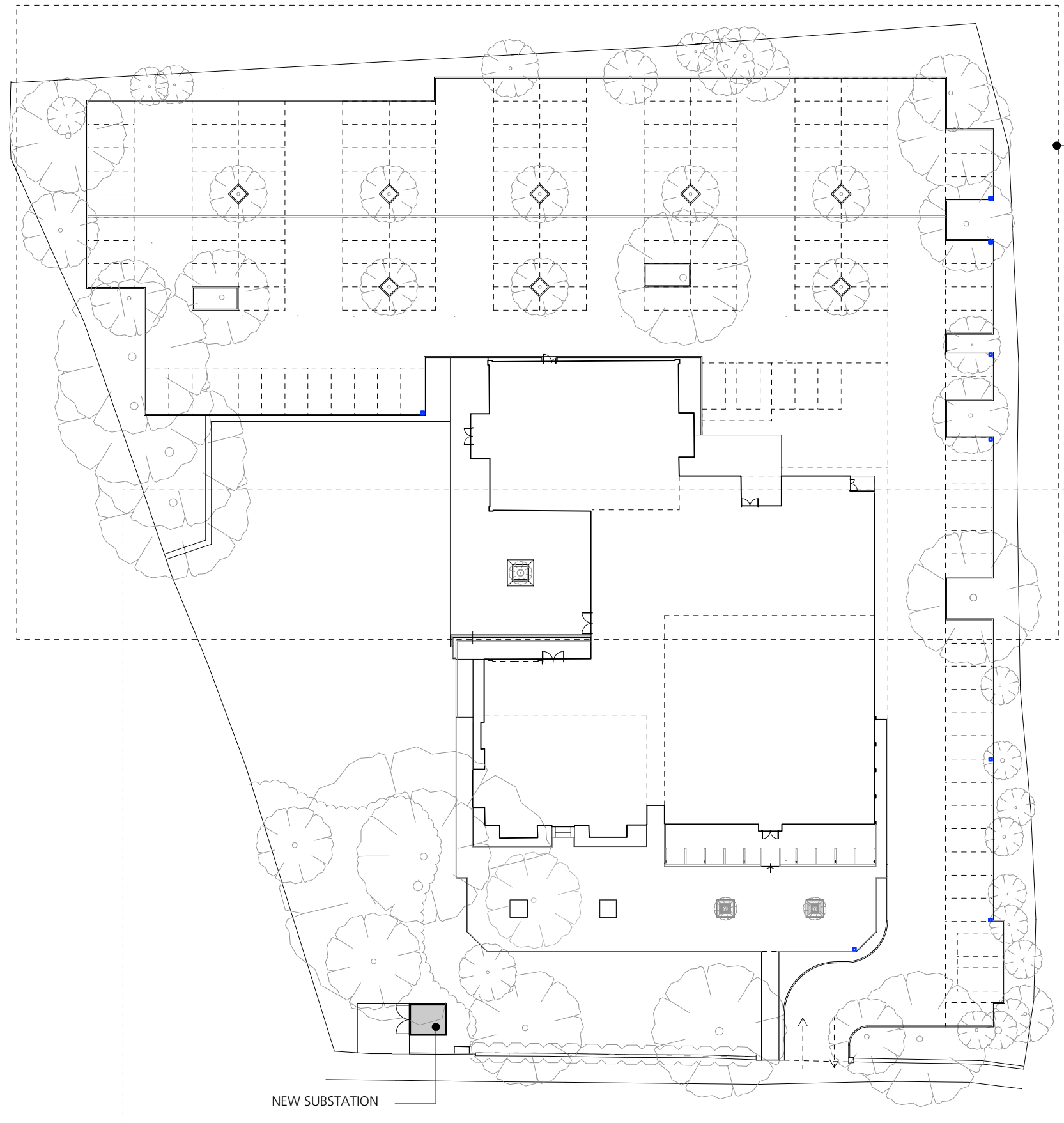
10. Appendices

- EP1.** Plan of car parking at Albert's, Standish
- EP2.** Assessment of car park location alternatives
- EP3.** 1929 site plan





EP1



FOR LARGER SCALE LAYOUT AND
SCOPE OF WORKS TO REAR OF SITE
SEE DRAWING 313 CD 9003

FOR LARGER SCALE LAYOUT AND SCOPE
OF WORKS TO FRONT OF SITE SEE
DRAWING 313 CD 9004

NEW SUBSTATION

SCHOOL LANE

- Rev F - 05/19
Front terrace adjusted
- Rev E - 05/19
Layout adjusted
- Rev D - 03/19
Substation position adjusted
- Rev C - 03/19
Rear terrace steps amended
- Rev B - 02/19
Terrace width reduced and vehicle
entrance adjusted, tree removed to
rear car park
- Rev A - 01/19
Rear car park, function room
terrace and front terrace amended

FOR PROPOSED SOFT LANDSCAPING WORKS
REFER TO LANDSCAPE DESIGNERS DRAWINGS

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Key Plan &
Northpoint

Client Elle R Leisure

Project **Albert's Restaurant & Bar
Standish**

Date March 2018

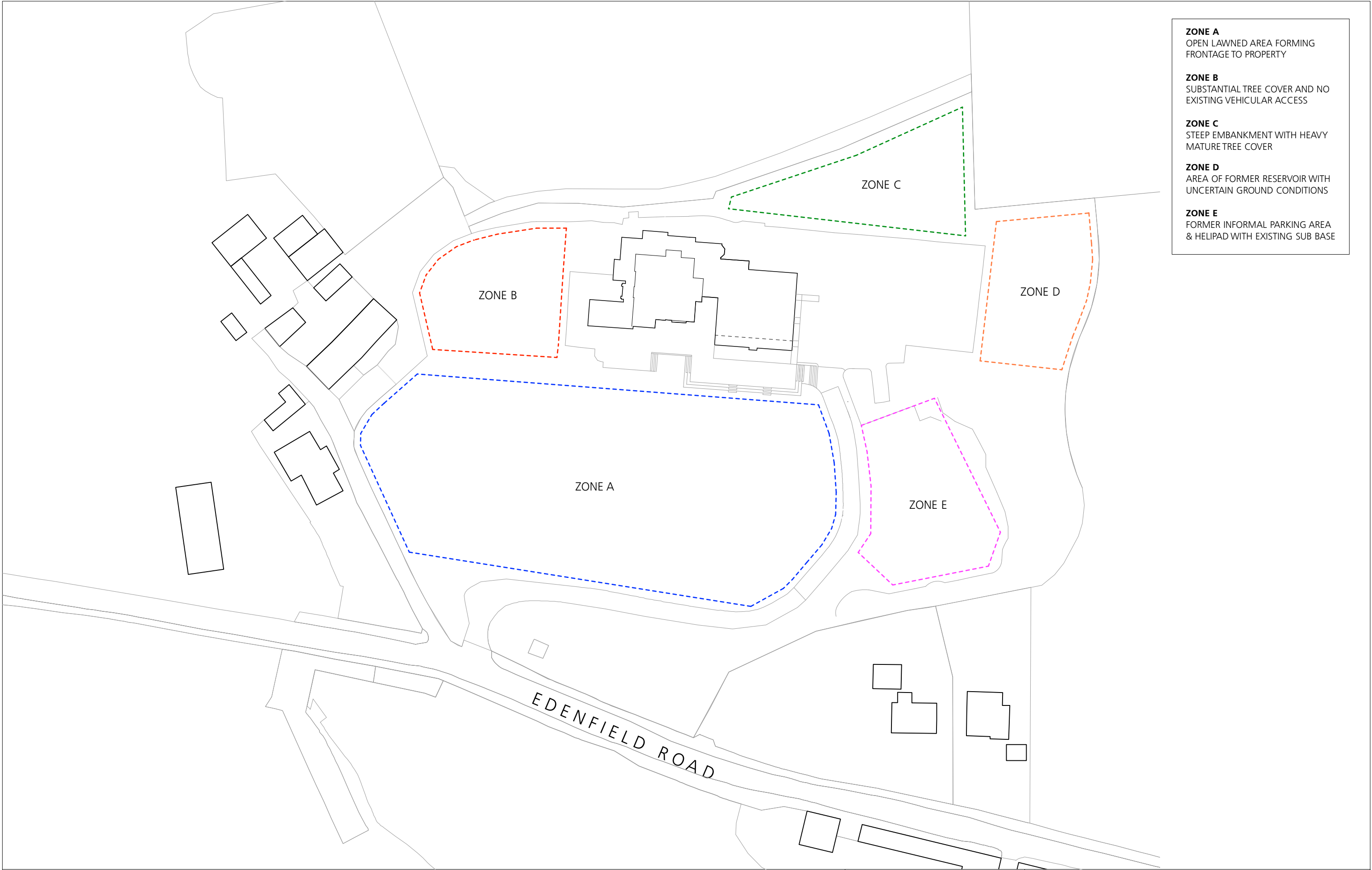
Status For information

Document **External Works
Proposed Site Plan**

Scale 1:500 @ A3

Doc Ref	313	CD	9002	F
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EP2



- ZONE A**
OPEN LAWNED AREA FORMING
FRONTAGE TO PROPERTY
- ZONE B**
SUBSTANTIAL TREE COVER AND NO
EXISTING VEHICULAR ACCESS
- ZONE C**
STEEP EMBANKMENT WITH HEAVY
MATURE TREE COVER
- ZONE D**
AREA OF FORMER RESERVOIR WITH
UNCERTAIN GROUND CONDITIONS
- ZONE E**
FORMER INFORMAL PARKING AREA
& HELIPAD WITH EXISTING SUB BASE



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Client	Elle R Leisure
Project	Proposed Albert's Restaurant Edenfield Rd, Norden
Scale	1:500 @ A1 / 1:1000 @ A3
Date	December 2022

Document	Planning Drawing Potential Overspill Parking Zones
Status	For information

Doc Ref	366	PD	5002	A1
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EP3

Site Details:

Client Ref: EMS_759288_983333
Report Ref: EMS-759288_983333
Grid Ref: 384840, 415026

Map Name: County Series

Map date: 1929

Scale: 1:2,500

Printed at: 1:2,500



Surveyed 1929
Revised 1929
Edition N/A
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Levelled N/A

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Map legend available at:
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