



Chartered Town Planners & Architectural Technicians

GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

Installation of High Nets Course

Property Address: Hollingworth Lake, The Pavilion Rakewood Road, Littleborough, OL15 0AT

April 2024

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Green Belt Assessment is submitted on behalf of the Rochdale Council in respect of a planning application for the installation of a high nets course on land next to the Pavilion Café, Hollingworth Fold, Style Road, Littleborough, OL15 0AJ. This Assessment should be read in conjunction with other drawings and documents accompanying the planning application

1.2 This Assessment comprises:

- A description of the application property and surrounding area;
- A description of the proposed development; and
- How the application is considered to be exception to development in the Green Belt, in conformity with Paragraphs 147 and 148 of the NPPF.

2.0 APPLICATION PROPERTY AND SURROUNDING AREA

2.1 The proposed site for the high ropes course lies adjacent to the existing Hollingworth Café. The Café and proposed site form part of the Hollingworth Lake Country Park, which lies on the edge of Smithybridge, a suburb of Littleborough. The proposed site currently comprises an area of Woodland adjacent to the café.

3.0 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 The application seeks permission for a high nets course which will cover an approximate area of 24 x 32m (768m² (0.076Ha)). The development comprises 11 separate ‘raised pods’, with 15 elements between and connecting each pod, surrounded by a safety net. The pods are raised 2.9m from the ground, reaching a total height 6.16m. Each pod comprises a steel frame clad with timber with a timber roof.

3.2 At the ground level, a 100m deep layer of 10mm gravel is proposed. Other wooden obstacles would be located within the site area. The maximum height of these obstacles would be 4m.

4.0 GREEN BELT ASSESSMENT

4.1 The site is located in the Rochdale Green Belt. The National Planning Policy Framework

(referred to in this assessment as the NPPF) states that there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF further advises that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt.

4.2 Chapter 13 of the NPPF makes reference to protecting Green Belt land. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that:

“The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence”.

4.3 Paragraph 138 of the NPPF states that the Green Belt serves five purposes:

- “a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land”.*

4.4 Paragraph 147 of the NPPF states that:

“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances”.

4.5 Paragraph 148 also states that when considering any planning application in the Green Belt, that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, namely:

“When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”.

4.6 Paragraph 149 of the NPPF sets out seven exceptions to inappropriate development mentioned in Paragraph 147. One exception at paragraph 149.b) is for: *“The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”*.

4.7 The proposed high nets climbing course and its associated facilities are considered to be “outdoor recreation”, in accordance with Paragraph 149b set out above and are therefore considered to be an exception to inappropriate development.

4.8 This exception states that *“such facilities are not inappropriate only where they preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it”*. The site is located in an area of woodland and is not an ‘open’ area of the Green Belt. The majority of the structures are raised above the land and not on the ground. The proposed wooden ‘pods’ and ground level obstacles would also be below the height of the trees and treeline. It is therefore considered that the ‘openness’ of the Green Belt would be preserved.

4.9 The land currently forms part of the Hollingworth Lake Country Park, which is used primarily for outdoor recreational purposes. The proposed high ropes would also be used, and is defined as, an outdoor recreational space. Therefore the proposed use of the land would continue to be used for recreational purposes and would not conflict with the current purpose of the land, as set out in Paragraph 149b of the NPPF.

4.10 No trees are proposed to be removed as a part of the development proposal. It is therefore considered that the openness of the Green Belt would not be changed in this location and the use of the land would not conflict with the current purpose of the land, as well as not lead to any harm to the Green Belt.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 It is considered that the that the proposal would not represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The development is classed as an exception to inappropriate development in the Green Belt under Paragraph 149 (b) of the NPPF and would not harm the openness of the Green Belt.