

PLANNING STATEMENT

Proposed Redevelopment of Land (SUI GENERIS) at Corporation Road, Oldham OL11 4JB for the Erection of TWO Industrial Storage Units (Use Class B2/B8)

1. Introduction

This Planning Statement supports a full planning application for the redevelopment of land at Corporation Road, Oldham (OL11 4JB), currently used as a scrap yard, for the construction of two light industrial/storage units falling within Use Class B2/B8. The proposed development seeks to replace a long-established, low-density and visually uncoordinated Sui Generis use with a high-quality, modern storage units facility offering functional, flood-resilient, and environmentally conscious workspace suitable for small and medium-sized enterprises.

This statement sets out the full planning justification for the proposal, incorporating detailed assessments of site constraints, design evolution, environmental performance, and alignment with the strategic planning context. It draws on a comprehensive policy framework, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), the adopted Oldham Local Plan (2011), the Oldham Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF, where material), the Environment Agency's flood risk data, and current legislation regarding Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The statement provides a full planning balance assessment and concludes that the scheme constitutes a policy-compliant, economically beneficial, and environmentally responsible form of sustainable development in line with paragraph 11 of the NPPF.

2. Site Context and Existing Use

The application site is located on the western side of Corporation Road in Oldham, within a well-established commercial and industrial zone forming part of the broader Rochdale/Oldham employment corridor. The site is square in shape, extends to approximately 1,073m², and is enclosed on Corporation Rd by a brick wall and on all other sides by metal palisade fencing. Access is gained directly from Corporation Road via an existing dropped kerb, with sufficient road width to accommodate service vehicles.

The entire site is surfaced in impermeable hardstanding, with no areas of open ground, planting, or vegetation. The existing use comprises the storage of vehicles associated with the operation of Rochdale Van Breakers. The breakers yard has operated historically under a Sui Generis designation and features open storage, unregulated structures, and areas of unsurfaced compacted ground.

There are no protected trees, no landscape features of interest, and no residential receptors in the immediate vicinity. The surrounding area contains a mix of warehouse, light industrial, and distribution premises. The site does not fall within a Conservation Area, is not in proximity to any Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments, and is unaffected by any mineral safeguarding designations.

Topographically, the land is flat, with levels varying minimally between approximately 113.7m and 114.0m AOD. There is no basement development or significant site cut proposed. Importantly, the entirety of the site falls within Flood Zone 3 as defined by the Environment Agency, necessitating a robust approach to flood risk management and policy compliance through both the Sequential and Exception Tests.

3. The Proposed Development

The proposed scheme involves the erection of one portal frame unit split into 2 single-storey industrial/storage units, each measuring approximately 173m² in gross internal area, creating a combined GIA of 347m². The buildings are designed with a steel portal frame system, profiled metal cladding, and insulated roof sheets. Each unit will include a full-height roller shutter door and a separate pedestrian access point to enable flexible access arrangements.

The height of each unit is carefully calibrated to reflect both functional and contextual requirements. The eaves/haunch height is set at 7.5 metres, with a ridge height of 10.0 metres. This ensures sufficient internal clearance for racking, light vehicle storage, or small machinery, while maintaining proportionate massing relative to neighbouring buildings.

A continuous 1.0 metre-wide perimeter footpath is provided around each building for maintenance and circulation purposes. Site access remains unchanged and is suitable for cars and small vans only. Swept path analysis confirms that standard service and delivery vans can safely enter, turn, and exit within the yard.

The site layout provides a surfaced yard of approximately 600m² to be finished in porous tarmac in contrast to the existing 100% impermeable yard area at present, representing a substantial environmental improvement. Each unit will be equipped with a WC connected to the existing drainage network. Internal arrangements are left open-plan to maximise adaptability. No landscaping is proposed, consistent with the site's compact size, operational function, and the absence of any existing vegetative cover or ecological features.

4. Planning Policy Framework

4.1 National Policy – National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023)

The NPPF sets a clear national direction for plan-making and decision-taking, centred around the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 states that decisions should promote development that is in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraphs 81 and 82 place strong emphasis on supporting economic growth and productivity, specifically encouraging flexibility in employment space provision.

Paragraph 120 promotes the efficient use of previously developed land, particularly where it brings forward underutilised sites for active use. Paragraphs 159–169 of the NPPF address development in flood risk areas, stating that proposals must pass the Sequential and Exception Tests, incorporate resilience measures, and avoid increasing flood risk elsewhere.

4.2 Local Planning Policy – Oldham Local Plan (2011)

Relevant policies include:

- **Policy 1: Climate Change and Sustainable Development** – Supports development that reduces carbon emissions and incorporates sustainable design.
- **Policy 5: Promoting Accessibility and Sustainable Transport Choices** – Seeks safe and accessible developments that minimise transport impacts.
- **Policy 6: Green Infrastructure** – Requires proposals to maintain or enhance green infrastructure, biodiversity, and ecosystem services.

- **Policy 9: Local Environment** – Supports development that improves local amenity, visual quality, and environmental performance.
- **Policy 18: Supporting Employment and Economic Growth** – Encourages industrial and employment development in appropriate locations, especially where it reuses brownfield land.
- **Policy 19: Water and Flooding** – Ensures development in flood-prone areas incorporates flood mitigation and SuDS where feasible.

4.3 Other Material Considerations

- **Oldham SFRA (Level 1, 2020)** – Identifies the Corporation Road area as a functional floodplain at risk of overtopping during a 1 in 100-year storm event.
- **Greater Manchester Spatial Framework** – Prioritises intensification of employment uses on previously developed land, with strong support for small business units.
- **Environment Act 2021** – Introduces BNG requirements, subject to defined exemptions for hardstanding and low-habitat baseline sites.

5. Assessment Against Policy and Material Considerations

5.1 Land Use Justification and Spatial Policy Compliance

The proposed redevelopment is fully aligned with both the strategic objectives and site-specific land use policies of Oldham Council. The existing Sui Generis use is not a protected employment classification, and its operational nature (metal breaking, open storage) is poorly integrated into the evolving industrial estate context. By contrast, the proposal delivers modern, employment-generating floorspace with clear benefits in terms of job creation, site activation, and functional improvement.

Policy 18 of the Local Plan specifically supports the reuse of existing industrial land for employment purposes, particularly where it enhances the borough's employment land stock. This proposal directly contributes to that objective by providing three new employment units in a format tailored to local market needs. The modular layout and single-storey form allow the units to serve a wide spectrum of end users, including logistics operators, service trades, fabrication firms, and sole traders. There is no loss of residential land, no loss of greenfield sites, and no conflict with housing delivery targets. The development is wholly compatible with surrounding uses.

5.2 Design, Layout and Local Character

The design of the proposed development prioritises functionality, efficiency, and contextual compatibility. Each unit adopts a modern industrial typology with a steel portal frame construction, vertical metal cladding, and simple pitched roof profiles. The use of grey profiled metal sheeting offers both durability and visual cohesion with adjacent industrial buildings, many of which display similar material palettes and architectural forms.

The eaves height of 7.5 metres and ridge height of 10 metres have been carefully calibrated to balance operational flexibility with visual subordination to larger buildings in the wider area. These dimensions allow for mezzanine installation or racking systems if future occupiers require increased vertical storage, ensuring adaptability of the space over time. The 1.0-metre-wide perimeter maintenance path allows safe inspection and minimises long-term management burdens.

While no landscaping is proposed, this decision is justified by the compact nature of the site, the full hardstanding baseline, and the lack of existing greenery. Introducing peripheral planting would compromise operational yard space and conflict with the industrial context. Moreover, the replacement of the existing scrap yard with structured, enclosed buildings delivers a significant visual enhancement to the local streetscape, removing unsightly and disorderly external storage and reducing noise, dust, and environmental pollution.

In townscape terms, the development reinforces the industrial grain of the area, restores legibility to the site layout, and contributes to the sense of place along Corporation Road by enhancing the urban edge condition with clearly defined boundaries and identifiable units. It complies with Local Plan Policy 9 by improving visual amenity, reducing land-use conflict, and securing a better relationship between built form and public realm.

5.3 Access, Highways and Servicing

The site benefits from an existing access point from Corporation Road which will be retained in its current location. The road is of sufficient width and alignment to accommodate light commercial traffic, and the application.

No HGV access is proposed or required. The proposed use will generate less frequent and less intensive vehicular activity than the previous scrap yard operation, which often involved unscheduled lorry visits, material drop-offs, and vehicle stacking. By introducing formal demarcation of access, parking and loading areas, the proposal improves safety and spatial efficiency within the yard.

Policy 5 of the Local Plan requires development to demonstrate safe and sustainable access, and not create severe impacts on the transport network. This scheme satisfies those requirements and supports active travel through clear pedestrian access routes, level thresholds, and adequate sightlines. Public transport nodes are available within a 10-minute walk, including bus stops on Manchester Street and Middleton Road.

5.4 Flood Risk and Drainage

The entire site is located in Flood Zone 3 as defined by the Environment Agency, representing land with a greater than 1% annual probability of river flooding. The River Roch lies within close proximity, and although no formal flood defences are recorded, modelled data suggests the primary risk is from fluvial events exceeding bank capacity.

A comprehensive site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA), has been submitted alongside this application, confirms that the proposed development is appropriate given the 'Less Vulnerable' classification of B2/B8 use. In accordance with NPPF paragraph 167, the development passes both the Sequential and Exception Tests.

The Sequential Test is met because there are no available, suitable, or deliverable alternative sites for employment use within Flood Zones 1 or 2 in the surrounding area that offer comparable size, location, or operational suitability. The Exception Test is passed by virtue of the scheme's regenerative and economic benefits and its compliance with a detailed flood mitigation strategy.

The FRA confirms that finished floor levels will be set at existing ground level (approx. 114.0m AOD) to enable level access for loading and regulatory compliance under Part M of the Building Regulations. Passive flood resilience measures are incorporated throughout, including:

- Raised electrical sockets
- Concrete floor slab detailing with water-resistant additives
- Flood-compatible roller shutters
- Non-return valves to prevent sewer surcharge

Surface water drainage will be managed using approximately 600m² of porous tarmac, representing a material improvement over the existing 100% impermeable concrete yard. The porous surfacing attenuates flow and contributes to infiltration, helping to minimise runoff rates in line with CIRIA SuDS Manual C753 guidance.

Foul drainage from the WC facilities will connect to the existing network. As the development introduces no additional impermeable area, and provides betterment in runoff management, it is compliant with Local Plan Policy 19 and the EA's development-in-flood-zones criteria.

5.5 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and Environmental Impact

Under the provisions of the Environment Act 2021 and Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), BNG became a statutory requirement from February 2024. However, not all developments are subject to this requirement. The government's official guidance exempts proposals that fall below specific thresholds and where no measurable habitat loss occurs.

This site clearly qualifies for exemption under the “de minimis” threshold. The entirety of the 1,073m² site is sealed hardstanding, devoid of soil substrate, vegetation, linear habitat, or ecological connectivity. No trees, hedgerows, scrub, or grassland exist, and no landscape alterations are proposed. The baseline biodiversity score of the site is 0.00 habitat units using the DEFRA BNG Metric 4.0.

According to government guidance, developments impacting less than 25m² of habitat and less than 5 metres of linear features are excluded from mandatory BNG. As this proposal results in zero habitat loss and introduces no change to any ecological features, a BNG plan is not required. The exemption is therefore valid and should be accepted by the Local Planning Authority.

Nonetheless, the proposal provides qualitative environmental betterment. By introducing regulated stormwater control through permeable surfacing. The replacement of a scrapyards with a clean industrial yard supports the objectives of Policy 6 of the Local Plan and paragraph 180 of the NPPF by improving the quality of the built and natural environment.

5.6 Economic and Social Benefits

The proposal will generate multiple economic benefits at both construction and operational phases. During construction, local contractors, material suppliers, and fit-out firms will be engaged, supporting short-term employment and procurement. Once operational, the units are expected to support 3 to 6 full-time equivalent jobs, depending on tenancy type and operational configuration.

The modular nature of the units caters to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly trades, light assembly, last-mile logistics, and micro-distribution—all sectors identified as growing priorities in the Greater Manchester Economic Vision and Oldham's Local Industrial Strategy.

By facilitating the growth of SMEs, the development directly supports the diversification and resilience of Oldham's economy. It also promotes local supply chains, reduces the need for long-distance commuting, and encourages compact urban employment growth in accordance with sustainable development principles.

The proposal therefore contributes to the inclusive economy agenda, supports post-COVID business recovery, and makes a material contribution to employment land delivery without greenfield encroachment or public subsidy.

6. Planning Balance and Conclusion

The proposed redevelopment of land at Corporation Road, Oldham, represents a rare convergence of strategic policy alignment, environmental improvement, and economic uplift. It delivers meaningful regeneration of a long-neglected brownfield site through the creation of modern, adaptable industrial floorspace tailored to the needs of local businesses. This is not speculative overdevelopment, but a rational, proportionate and targeted response to evidenced market demand within an established employment zone.

The application satisfies every policy test. It is entirely consistent with the spatial vision of the Oldham Local Plan, including Policies 1, 5, 6, 9, 18 and 19, and is directly supported by multiple paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework — notably paragraphs 11, 81, 82, 120 and 167. The proposed use is appropriate to its setting, operationally low-impact, and visually well-integrated. Flood risk has been addressed with site-specific mitigation. Biodiversity Net Gain obligations are fully discharged through a statutory exemption, and permeability is significantly improved through sustainable surface upgrades.

There is no loss of open space, amenity land, or residential function. No technical objections are anticipated, and no material harm has been identified that could justify withholding consent. Conversely, the scheme delivers quantifiable public benefits: job creation, brownfield regeneration, surface water betterment, flood resilience, and economic activation of previously inert land.

In applying the tilted balance under paragraph 11 of the NPPF, it is clear that the benefits of the development significantly and demonstrably outweigh any residual concerns. This is precisely the type of low-carbon, employment-generating, sustainable investment that planning policy at every level is designed to support.