

Installation of 4 no. six berth sleeping pods and roundhouse structure to provide communal space for cooking, eating, and socialising.

Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite
Ashworth Road
Rochdale
OL11 5UP

Planning Statement
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CONTENTS

- 1. SITE DESCRIPTION & CONSTRAINTS.**
- 2. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL.**
- 3. PLANNING HISTORY.**
- 4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY.**
 - A. Local Policy.**
 - B. National Policy.**
- 5. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT / CONSIDERATION OF GREEN BELT POLICY.**
 - A. Whether the proposal is appropriate development in the Green Belt?**
 - B. Whether there are very special circumstances to justify the proposal if the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt?**
 - a) Social & community benefits.
 - b) Support from planning policy.
 - c) There is no suitable alternative location for the development.
 - d) The proposed buildings by their nature are not permanent.
 - e) The development essentially allows a use that already happens at the site to continue.
- 6. ASSESSMENT OF OTHER DETAILED PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS.**
 - A. Design & Visual Impact.**
 - B. Highway Safety.**
 - C. Residential Amenity.**
 - D. Biodiversity & Trees.**
 - E. Flood risk & drainage.**

Appendices

1. SITE DESCRIPTION & CONSTRAINTS.

- 1.1 The application site is at Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite. The land forms part of a larger field that is mown and maintained as an area of open grassland by the campsite use. The land is relatively level in profile. The entire field is very well screened from wider public views by hedgerows and trees to the site boundaries.
- 1.2 The campsite is located in the Ashworth Valley between Bury to the west and Rochdale to the east. The site is an open countryside location that is designated as Green Belt. The site is not designated as forming part of a Conservation Area and there are no nearby Listed Buildings. The site is not within an area of flood risk (as identified by Environment Agency mapping).



Fig. 1. Approximate application site boundary.

2. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL.

- 2.1 Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite is only open to scout groups, guide groups, youth groups and organisations with recognised child protection policies. The site is not open to the general public.
- 2.2 The scout campsite wishes to provide 4 no. 6 berth sleeping pods that are located around a central roundhouse structure providing communal space for cooking, eating, and socialising. The organisation has already obtained grant funding for the project and attached as Appendix A to this statement is a document that has been used by Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite to support the funding applications.
- 2.3 Many scouting groups do not have their own scout hut premises and meet in churches, schools or community centres. The absence of their own storage space for the scouting groups makes it challenging for the groups to store camping equipment such as tents and to dry such equipment after a wet weekend. Furthermore, there is the added cost of owning such equipment.
- 2.4 Many scout groups have therefore out of necessity opted for indoor camps, but the aim of Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite is to provide a more authentic experience through the provision of sleeping pods and a roundhouse for cooking, eating and evening social activities.
- 2.5 Other than supervising adults, the young guests of the campsite do not require car parking provision. The existing large parking area, on the western side of the group of buildings at the campsite, will provide sufficient space for to meet the needs of the new development. There are already toilet and washroom facilities in the existing buildings to the west that will be used by visitors.
- 2.6 The Architects plans and design & access statement, that are provided with the application, provide further information on the precise design and materials used in the development proposal.

3. PLANNING HISTORY.

- 3.1 Rochdale Borough Council's planning application database identifies two previous applications relating to the campsite, those being: -
- 3.2 **Planning Ref. 98/D35988.** Single storey garage/workshop/storage building. Approved 8 January 1999.
- 3.3 **Planning Ref. 13/00235/FUL.** Single storey rear infill extension to scout park holiday centre. Approved 30 April 2013.
- 3.4 More recently applications have been submitted by the Rochdale Company of Archers on land owned by Ashworth Valley Campsite. That land is to the north of the application site and has no impact on this current application submission.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY.

A. Local Policy.

- 4.1 The development plan sets out the local planning policy against which the application proposal should be assessed. The development plan for Rochdale does not comprise a single document. There are several documents of relevance which currently comprise: -
- The Places for Everyone Plan, which is a joint development plan document for 9 Greater Manchester districts including Rochdale. The plan was adopted in March 2024.
 - The Core Strategy that was adopted 2016, and
 - The 2006 Unitary Development Plan.
- 4.2 The Council is also working on a new draft local plan, which is to build on the more strategic aims and objectives of the Places for Everyone plan. That document is at an extremely early stage of preparation and can not be taken into account in the decision-making process.
- 4.3 Policies of particular relevance are set out below: -

Core Strategy Adopted 2016.

Policy	Policy Aims
C6: Improving health and wellbeing.	To improve health and wellbeing by a variety of means including: h) maintaining and enhancing the borough's biodiversity, natural environment, open spaces and outdoor sport and recreational areas
C8: Improving community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities.	The objective of the policy is to support community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities.
G4: Protecting Green Belt Land.	The policy explains that the Council will look to protect the Green Belt except for that development which is deemed not to be inappropriate or where very special circumstances can be met.
SO2: To create successful and healthy communities.	A strategic objective of the Council identified by this policy is to improve the general health and quality of people's lives through better access to health facilities and services, education, community and cultural facilities and open space.

Unitary Development Plan 2006.

Policy	Policy Aims
D4: Control of Development in the Green Belt	The policy aims to protect the Green Belt from inappropriate development. It identifies that appropriate development includes essential facilities for outdoor sport and recreation and other uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.
LT/1: Sport, Leisure and Tourism.	The policy identifies that the Council will permit and promote developments for leisure.
LT/3: Development for Tourism and Leisure.	States that extended tourist attractions or facilities for visitors will be permitted, subject to several criteria.
LT/6: Camping Sites, Touring and Static Sites.	Outlines that such developments will be permitted provided that several criteria can be met.
LT/9: Protection of Existing Built Sports and Recreational facilities.	LT/9 states that the redevelopment or change of use of sports and recreation facilities will not be permitted. The objective of this policy is to retain such facilities for the health, welfare, and enjoyment of the local community.
G/CF/1: Community facilities and public services.	The policy states that proposals that improve the quality, range and distribution of community facilities within the borough will be permitted provided they have no unacceptable impact on the quality of the local environment and are accessible to the communities they are intended to serve.
CF/2 General criteria for the development of local community and health facilities.	Explains criteria that need to be met for new local community and health facilities.



Places for Everyone – Adopted March 2024.

Policy	Policy Aims
JP-G9: The Green Belt	The policy sets out general Green Belt considerations.
JP-P7: Sport and recreation.	Aims to protect and enhance Sport and Recreation facilities for all ages.

4.4 The UDP policies (and to a lesser extent) the Core Strategy policies are now aged, and less weight can be given to them in the decision-making process.

B. National Policy.

- 4.5 The current version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the government in December 2024. The December 2024 NPPF sets out at paragraph 11 a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.6 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF sets out that:

“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*
 - i). the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
 - ii). any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.”*

4.7 Detailed development plan policies are dated and therefore the requirements of paragraph 11d) are applicable.

4.8 Paragraph 98. of the NPPF is also applicable. It states that: -

98.To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;*

4.9 Paragraph 154 at section 13 of the of the NPPF sets out that development in the Green Belt should be regarded as inappropriate unless one of a list of 8 exceptions apply. Of those exceptions listed under paragraph 154 criterion b) is relevant. It states that development in the Green Belt is acceptable where it involves: -

- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, 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;*

4.10 Paragraph 153 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.

5. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT / CONSIDERATION OF GREEN BELT POLICY.

- 5.1 Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite is a long-established facility providing an excellent resource for Greater Manchester and further afield. The site is highly accessible to residents of the city, but in a rural countryside setting that provides an opportunity for children and youths to benefit from access and activities in the 'great outdoors'. The site offers its visitors a range of activities including abseiling, air rifle shooting, climbing, crossbow range, archery, and other outdoor skills. As stated in section 1 of this report, Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite is only open to scout groups, guide groups, youth groups, and organisations with recognised child protection policies. The site is not open to the general public.

A. Whether the proposal is appropriate development in the Green Belt?

- 5.2 Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite provides a form of outdoor recreation through the camping experience and the provision of the associated outdoor activities for scouts, guides, and other recognised youth groups to participate in. The application proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable within the Green Belt as it facilitates outdoor recreation in accordance with paragraph 154 criterion b). Criterion b) also requires new facilities to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.
- 5.3 The structures to be sited on the land are temporary in their design and nature. The land is already put to use in connection with outdoor camping and therefore it is already the case that activities on the site impact on the openness of the Green Belt. Furthermore, the application site is already very well screened given the presence of trees and a mature hedgerow to the boundaries of the field within which the development is proposed. In summary, it is not considered that the development has any unacceptable impact on openness and the development is acceptable in the Green Belt as an exception listed under paragraph 154 criterion b).

B. Whether there are very special circumstances to justify the proposal if the proposal is considered to be inappropriate development in the green belt?

- 5.4 For developments where it is not accepted that the exceptions set out at paragraph 154 of the NPPF are met, paragraph 153 states that such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. It is considered that there are very special circumstances in this instance why development should be approved.

5.5 The following very special circumstances are considered to apply: -

a) Social & community benefits.

5.6 Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite is a not-for-profit organisation that provides facilities for young people on organised trips. The use of the development provides significant social and community benefits for Greater Manchester and beyond. In particular: -

- The facility builds confidence & independence of young people. It enables visitors to navigate new environments, make decisions without constant parental support, overcoming challenges and gaining a strong sense of achievement
- It develops social skills & teamwork, by encouraging communication and cooperation, teaching conflict resolution, and building empathy and trust. In addition to the scouts, the facility is used by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme who are well known for developing leadership and teamwork through outdoor challenges.
- The use improves physical health through increased physical activity levels, which in turn supports mental wellbeing. Time in nature has been consistently linked to improved psychological wellbeing.
- Visitors learn life skills such as problem-solving, risk assessment and safety awareness, and time management.

5.7 In summary, organised outdoor programmes help young people grow physically, socially, emotionally, and practically. They provide structured opportunities to develop independence, resilience, leadership, and wellbeing — often in ways that classroom learning alone cannot achieve.

b) Support from planning policy.

5.8 Support is provided by both local and national planning policy for this type of development. Core Strategy policy C6 seeks to improve health and well-being by a variety of means including maintaining and enhancing the borough's outdoor sport and recreational areas. Core Strategy policy C8 seeks to improve community, sport, leisure and cultural facilities and policy SO2 seeks to create successful and healthy communities by improving the general health and quality of people's lives through better access to health facilities and services, education, community and cultural facilities and open space. Policy JP-P7 from Places for Everywhere aims to protect and enhance sport and recreation facilities for all ages.

- 5.9 With respect to national planning policy, paragraph 98 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that planning policies and decisions plan positively for the provision of community facilities and other local services and take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community

c) There is no suitable alternative location for the development.

- 5.10 By the very nature of the use, it must go in a rural area. A development to support outdoor activities for the young in a rural location cannot realistically be sited within the urban area. However, for a rural location, the site is highly accessible being located in the open countryside on fringe of Greater Manchester where it is ideally placed to serve the community. Given the nature and purpose of Green Belt planning policy, such locations on the fringe of major cities are going to be designated as Green Belt.
- 5.11 Furthermore, the Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite complex is already long established and sited within the Green Belt. The development would require the construction of new facilities such as shower and toilet blocks, storage buildings to house equipment for the outdoor activities, and new access roads and parking facilities were it not sited at the existing complex. The site is therefore the logical location and development elsewhere within the Green Belt would require a greater amount of associated development to support the use (i.e. through the construction of the shower and toilet blocks, etc, etc).

d) The proposed buildings by their nature are not permanent.

- 5.12 Whilst the proposed buildings should last many years, by the nature of their construction they are not permanent structures. It is therefore contended that no long-term impact on the openness of the Green Belt will arise. If considered necessary by the Local Planning Authority, the applicant is willing to accept a condition on the planning permission requiring the removal of the proposed camping pods and roundhouse structure within 12 months should they cease to be used for their original intended purpose.

e) The development essentially allows a use that already happens at the site to continue.

- 5.13 The site is already operated as a campsite and activity centre for the scouts, guides, and other similar organisations. However, for the reasons explained in section 2 of this report, many of these organisations no longer have the ability to hold an outdoor camp and instead are increasingly turning to indoor camps as an alternative. The development proposal allows an activity to take place that is very similar to an outdoor camp. The land in the past has been used to

facilitate the outdoor camp, and tents and other temporary structures have been sited on the land to facilitate that. The development proposal just allows that use to continue, albeit within structures to be sited on the land that will have more permanence than tents, marquees, etc.

- 5.14 In summary, collectively there are strong reasons why the development should be supported. Those reasons would comprise very special circumstances that justify approval of the planning application, clearly outweighing any perceived limited harm caused to the Green Belt.

6. ASSESSMENT OF OTHER DETAILED PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

A. Design & Visual Impact

- 6.1 The proposed pods are simple timber structures, typical in their design and appearance. The roundhouse is to be clad in timber with green felt shingles to the roof. The chosen development site is appropriately located sited adjacent to other buildings and development at the scout campsite, but within a field that already has good screening to the site boundaries. In summary there is no unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the wider open countryside.

B. Highway Safety

- 6.2 Access to the scout campsite is existing and unchanged. There is existing car parking for the site. Most visitors will arrive by a minibus, and the proposed development is not expected to significantly generate more vehicle movements over and above those that currently take place.

C. Residential Amenity

- 6.3 There are no nearby neighbours that would be affected by the development.

D. Biodiversity & Trees

- 6.4 The application is accompanied by a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment and an arboricultural impact assessment. The information demonstrates that there will be no unacceptable impact on trees and also provides a strategy for demonstrating how BNG will be achieved.

E. Flood risk & drainage.

- 6.5 The application site is not within a flood risk area identified by Environment Agency mapping.
- 6.6 Surface water drainage from the structures will soakaway into the adjacent ground. There is no new foul drainage proposed. Visitors will use the existing campsite bathrooms and washing up facilities (for washing up after camp cooks).

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The scout campsite provides significant social and community benefits to Greater Manchester and further afield. The proposed development will allow the existing scout campsite to develop and widen the offering that it presently provides meeting an identified gap in what organisations are able to offer to young people.
- 7.2 This report outlines the benefits that the development will provide, and grant funding has already been agreed in principle for the project (subject to planning permission).
- 7.3 The Council is therefore requested to provide its' support, permit the application, and allow Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite to continue to benefit the Borough and wider community. Should there be any concerns with respect to the development proposal, or should any further clarification be required, the applicant would welcome engagement with the Council with view to delivering the development proposal.

Planning Statement:
Installation of 4 no. six berth sleeping pods and roundhouse structure to provide communal space for cooking, eating, and socialising at Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite, Ashworth Road, Rochdale.



Appendices

Appendix	Summary
A	Extract of information provided with applications for grant funding for the project.

Planning Statement:
**Installation of 4 no. six berth sleeping pods and roundhouse structure to
provide communal space for cooking, eating, and socialising at
Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite, Ashworth Road, Rochdale.**



Appendix A

Extract of information provided with applications
for grant funding for the project.



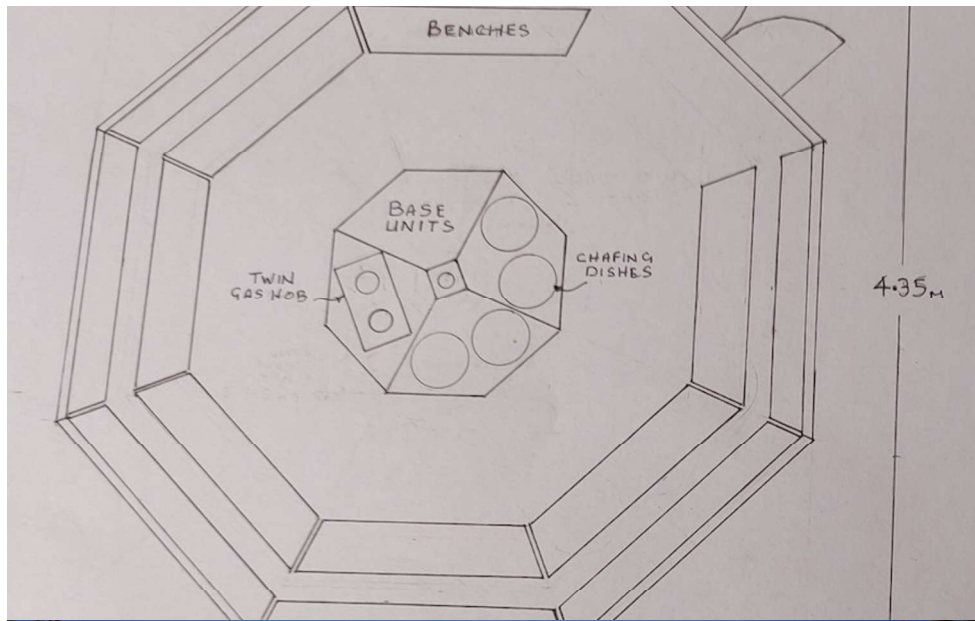
OBJECTIVES

Within scouting, many groups across the UK meet in churches, schools, or community centers. This often makes it challenging for them to go camping, leading some groups to opt for indoor camps.

There are two main reasons for choosing indoor-only camping: lack of funds and the inability to dry tents after a wet weekend.

Our goal is to provide these groups with a more authentic camping experience by offering sleeping pods and a roundhouse for cooking and eating.

This document will outline the full costs and highlight the benefits this initiative will bring not only to local scouts but also to scouts from around the UK and abroad who visit our site.



The Round House – Structure and Layout

The roundhouse is purpose-built to provide a unique and enjoyable base for all camps. It offers a warm, dry area for cooking, eating, and nighttime activities.

Benches around the edge provide seating for everyone, and fold-out tables from the walls allow for communal meals.

The building's distinctive shape and unique roof design will ensure a memorable experience for all.

The Pods

Each pod can sleep up to 6 people providing a dry and warm sleeping environment for all.

These pods are modern and will create an exciting environment for any young camper.



The Research

We have conducted extensive research into the demand from groups and schools along with the benefits they will gain. We contacted at least six different campsites in the north that already have these types of pods. All sites reported that their pods are extremely popular, with groups booking over a year in advance to secure their spot.

Additionally, we have gathered opinions and input from campers at Ashworth Valley, asking roughly 200 groups over a two-year period. All expressed their interest and excitement for the next big development at Ashworth Valley.

Currently, Ashworth Valley has two buildings: the Pack Holiday Centre (dorms) and the Ranch House (catering/shelter). In 2023, the Pack Holiday Centre was fully booked except for four weekends, while the Ranch House had 12 free weekends. The trend for 2024 appears similar. The primary difference between these buildings is the dormitory-style sleeping accommodation, highlighting how many groups rely on site-provided lodging.

We believe that this village will enable us to host more groups on site and give everyone an equal opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, learn something new, and most importantly, have fun!

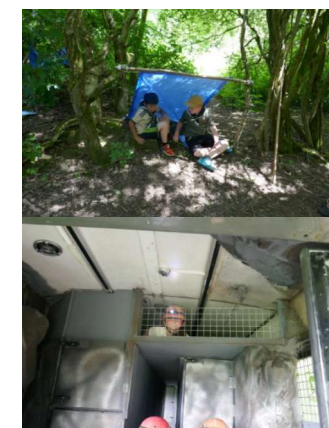


How We Think This Project Fits Your CSR Framework

Developing People



- *“We are passionate in our belief that every individual deserves a chance at developing their skills and we are acutely aware that unfortunately sometimes these opportunities are not available due to a range of different factors ...” (TMR CSR Framework)*
- Each year, Ashworth Valley gives hundreds of young people the opportunity to develop outdoor skills, and engage in activities like camping, hiking, climbing, and more. The adventures they have with us help to build confidence, leadership, team-working, and independence. These are foundational skills that will help them throughout their life. Many go on to become leaders or instructors, passing on their knowledge to the next generation of young people.
- Unfortunately, there are many Scout groups, youth groups and schools in our area that simply don't have access to their own camping equipment, or who lack the space to store or maintain equipment properly.
- The new village, with the basic pod sleeping accommodation and communal round house will allow us to offer a more authentic outdoors camping experience for more disadvantaged young people and groups.



How We Think This Project Fits Your CSR Framework

Environmental Protection



- *“...we are looking for partners that tally with our company values and offer solutions that work across other areas of our CSR strategy, for example developing environmental understanding in young people ...” (TMR CSR Strategy)*
- With its strong focus on both community and outdoor pursuits, Scouting has a long heritage of promoting sustainability and care of our natural environment.
- Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite consists of 45 acres of gently sloping grassland and a wonderful backwoods area that our visitors can explore. We take seriously our stewardship of this beautiful natural location, through careful development and maintenance that benefits the young people of today and tomorrow.
- The area of the site where we intend to place the village is near to our dipping pond, where we are already creating a natural habitat for native species of plants, insects and animals. In addition to landscaping for the village, we also intend to increase the biodiversity of this entire area of the site.
- The aim of the project includes an increase in biodiversity through the uplift of existing low distinctiveness habitats by developing a management plan to bring habitats into positive management, eradicate invasive species, and reduce prevalence of indicator species of suboptimal habitat condition. This will include;
 - Management of a more species rich meadow in place of modified grassland through an appropriate and long-term management regime.
 - Planting more native trees and hedges to enhance biodiversity, absorb more carbon, and reduce surface water runoff.
 - Create and manage more wetland habitat for a wide range of species.
 - Utilise habitats as an educational resource for users of the camp to encourage better understanding of species, habitats and management of areas for nature conservation.

