

DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

APPLICATION NO.

24/00835/FUL

CASE OFFICER

Nick Brookman

DETERMINATION DATE 16/04/2025

EXT OF TIME 25/04/2025

Address: Land adjacent to No.1 Wildhouse Court, Wildhouse Lane, Milnrow, OL16 3UU

Proposal: Construction of a single bespoke two-storey detached dwelling with a double garage and associated landscaping

PUBLICITY	Weekly list expired?	Y	Site notice expired?	Y
	Neighbour letters expired?	Y	Press Notice expired?	Y

DELEGATION	Significant departure from local plan?	N	Contrary to national policy?	N
	Applicant a Council Member or officer?	N	Contrary to previous decision?	N
	Major with 10 or more objections and recommending approval?	N	Called in or Planning Panel objection?	N

COMMENTS	Planning Panel comments received?	N
	Neighbour comments received?	Y

EIA	Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase?	N/A
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CONDITIONS	Pre-commencement conditions proposed?	Y
	Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)?	Y

RECOMMENDATION	APPROVE SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS
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CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY: RK

DATE: 23/04/2025

SITE

The application site is located off Wildhouse Court to the west of Wildhouse Lane (B6225) which links the village of Milnrow in the south to Smithybridge and Hollingworth Lake in the north.

The site is located approximately 1.3km away from Milnrow village centre which provides a number of amenities.

The application site itself is bound by residential properties in the north and south, Wildhouse Court road to the east and open countryside to the west. The Bellavista restaurant is located to the north and Olde Wylde House Cottage and Wild House Farmhouse is Grade II Listed.

The topography of the application site falls gradually from east to west away from the level of Wildhouse Court.

The application site is located in the Green Belt.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for the construction of a single bespoke two-storey detached dwelling with a double garage and associated landscaping.

The proposed dwelling is sited to make the most of the generously sized plot and it is constructed in a staggered layout which takes inspiration from the historic agricultural and residential buildings in the vicinity of the application site. The dwellings is centred around a form that is reflective of local vernacular which has resulted in an orientation that respects the surrounding environment and the proposed form and massing takes into account those of the local farmhouse groupings in the north and south.

The main entrance is double height and provides an area that is glazed both sides and contains a floating dog-legged staircase. It also provides a linked access to the single storey garage/refuse store, the south facing terrace, and the main ground floor family accommodation. Elevated views of the entrance courtyard and the wider landscape to the south are afforded from the first floor landing. An open plan arrangement at ground floor connects with the garden on three sides, with direct access to the south, west, and north facing terraces. The double height space above the dining room provides a view of the glulam grid shell roof structure above. There are 2 ensuite bedrooms on the ground floor which include an integral play area formed by an enlarged access corridor with a feature corner bay window. At first floor a large living space and the master bedroom are positioned to make the most of the long views of the Pennine landscape beyond. All rooms at first floor level will have a vaulted ceiling formed by a glulam supporting structure below a dual pitched traditional roof. The high roof level within the garage and rear space is given over to plant equipment.

Looking to harmonise with the local built environment the applicant has utilised a palette of materials, which in terms of texture and colour, echoes those of the existing built forms. Hidden gutters are featured to keep a crisp edge in keeping with the robust local building vernacular.

In terms of landscaping, the area to the north-west is given over to an enhanced wildlife zone which includes a rain garden and pond fed by water collected from the house rwp's. A small raised terrace provides long views of the wider landscape including the

Pennine hills to the north of Rochdale. A continuous native hedgerow is to be planted to the south, west and north boundaries.

A wastewater treatment plant is also proposed.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

Sub-Regional

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan was adopted and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the 9 authorities covered by the plan on 21st March 2024.

The following policies are relevant:

- JP-S1 Sustainable Development
- JP-S2 Carbon and Energy
- JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment
- JP-H1 Scale, Distribution and Phasing of New Housing Development
- JP-G1 Landscape Character
- JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- JP-G9 The Green Belt
- JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SO2 Creating successful and healthy communities

- C1 Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places
- C3 Delivering the right type of housing

SO3 Improving Design, image and quality of place

- P1 Improving image
- P2 Protecting and enhancing character, landscape and heritage
- P3 Improving design of new development

SO4 Promoting a greener environment

- G1 Tackling and adapting to climate change
- G2 Energy and new development
- G4 Protecting Green Belt
- G7 Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity
- G8 Managing water resources and flood risk
- G9 Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability

SO5 Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport

- T2 Improving accessibility

DM1 General Development Requirements

Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/2 – Green Belt

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

Supplementary Planning Guidance note 'Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development' (June 2016).

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

PREAPP/00027/22 – Erection of one dwelling.

Application 21/00616/FUL – Erection of one detached dwelling with associated landscaping – withdrawn 14 December 2021.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways and Engineering

No objection in principle subject to condition.

Environmental Health - Noise

No objection in principle subject to conditions.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

GMEU have commented as follows:

Invasive species including Himalayan balsam were previously recorded on the site. A management plan to avoid the spread of these, including an updated distribution map of the site should be conditioned.

Tree protection of retained hedgerows, trees and scrub should be conditioned.

Breeding birds – Condition vegetation clearance including the log piles, trees, shrubs and undergrowth (eg bramble) should avoid of the breeding season (March – August inclusive) unless it can be demonstrated that there is no nesting activity present. All wild birds are protected whilst nesting (Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981).

Reasonable Avoidance Measures – The Report has made an adequate assessment of the risk to amphibians and protected/Species of Principal Importance (great crested newt, toad and hedgehog). No protected or priority species were noted but common species can be trapped in foundation footings. The applicant's attention should be drawn to the simple recommendations at 4.1 and 4.4 of the Report. This can be communicated via an Informative attached to any permission if granted.

Biodiversity Enhancement & Landscape Specification - The Report makes recommendations in respect of biodiversity enhancement as guided by the NPPF and these are shown on the submitted drawings (Site Plans as Proposed SK02, dwg no 5, July 2020, CJP Partnership) including a pond, wildlife enhancement area and native hedge. It is recommended that the pond (section 4.5) is created and stocked with

locally native species from a reliable stockist. The specification of plants and the design (cross section of pond etc) can be conditioned on any permission if granted.

Lead Local Flood Authority

No comments received.

United Utilities

United Utilities originally sought clarification on the location of the new private sewerage tank as well as requesting the removal or decommissioning of the existing septic tank which is located in the north western area of the site.

Owing to subsequent correspondence between the applicant and United Utilities, United Utilities have since advised that United Utilities support the proposal to install a private wastewater treatment plant, suitably sized to treat foul flows from the development, prior to discharge to the existing watercourse. The Applicant will require Environment Agency consent for the discharge of treated effluent. United Utilities would not wish to adopt the works on completion.

United Utilities have recommended conditions relating to the design of the wastewater treatment plant.

Environment Agency

The application is outside of their external consultation checklist and they therefore do not have any comments at this time.

Conservation Officer

Subject to conditions, it is considered that the proposal could achieve neutral impact on the significance of the identified heritage assets.

Strategic Planning

No comments received.

REPRESENTATIONS

The application was publicised by sending letters to adjoining neighbours and a site notice was posted on 9th September 2024.

4 objection letters were received (3 from the same household) and comments from the objectors are summarised below.

- Access to the side and rear of the existing garages in the north should still be maintained.
- Is a new septic tank proposed?
- Drawings show part of the land to be developed belongs to No.1 The Barn.
- Photographs of the Listed Farmhouse don't show the beautiful front view of the house. This raises the question as to why the side and rear of the building and a photo of the garden in front of the house were included but not the front view.
- Balconies overlook neighbouring homes and gardens.
- Impact on daylight.
- Proposed pond will direct rainfall and drainage water onto other private land.

- Resident and visitor parking is already limited on the lane.
- Main water supply is already at a very low pressure.

One letter of support was received which commented that: *'As local residents in the area since 1990, we are writing to support the planning application to build a house on the empty land of land adjacent to 1 Wildhouse Court. The land itself lies within the building line of two existing properties, therefore we do not have a problem with a house being built there, and would consider it to be an asset to the area. In light of the new houses being built close by at Birchinley Manor, we would be perplexed if this application was refused'.*

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

Policy Position

Inappropriate Development

The application site is located within the Green Belt as allocated under the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map G/D/2. The National Planning Policy Framework, states that *'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 permanence'.*

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF requires that *'When considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt including harm to its openness. 'Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances'. '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'.*

The application is for the erection of 1 detached dwelling and Paragraph 154 states that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it meets one of the listed exceptions. In this instance the applicant is presenting the point that this application meets exception (e) *'limited infilling in villages'.*

The recent NPPF revision in December 2024 has also introduced additional forms of development that should also not be regarded as inappropriate and these fall under Paragraph 155 of the NPPF which relates to the development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt where:

- *The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- *There is demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- *The development would be in a sustainable location with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- *Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.*

At the local level, PfE Policy JP-G9 which has superseded Core Strategy Policy (G4) sets out that *'the beneficial use of the Green Belt will be enhanced where this can be*

achieved without harm to its openness, permanence or ability to serve its five purposes. In particular, the enhancement of its green infrastructure functions will be encouraged, such as improved public access and habitat restoration, helping to deliver environmental and social benefits for our residents and providing the high-quality green spaces that will support economic growth'.

As alluded to above, the application in this instance is presenting the argument that the development falls under exception (e) of NPPF paragraph 154. However, Planning Officers disagree with the applicant's view insofar as to exception e of paragraph 154 being relevant in this instance.

In assessing the proposal against the exceptions referred to above Officers can firstly confirm that during pre-application discussions Officers advised that the site and development would not benefit from any listed exceptions under NPPF paragraph 154. The applicant has presented the case that the proposed development would benefit from criterion E of paragraph 154 and would constitute a limited infill within a village. Taking this view into account, as well as the provisions of paragraph 155 of the NPPF, Officers can advise as follows.

First of all, for the avoidance of any doubt, the NPPF does not provide a definition of limited infilling and interpretation of this is made according to local circumstances and development plan definitions. It is without question that owing to the benefit of a site visit, the application site sits between existing dwellings to the north and south and the application would in the opinion of Planning Officers be an infill development site. However, whilst the village centre of Milnrow is approximately only 1.2km away from the application site to the south, when heading toward the application site from this settlement, the journey becomes increasingly rural with sporadic properties and farmsteads around the site which are characteristic of rural development, being widely separated and surrounded by undulating farmland and open countryside to the east and west.

It is accepted by Officers that 1.2km is not an unreasonable walking distance and the application site is not isolated, but principally, the application site sits within the countryside and it is physically, visually and functionally separated from the village envelope of Milnrow. There is little to suggest that the loose cluster of development in this location has its own village identity and Officers therefore consider that the application site is not in the village of Milnrow and this application is not considered to be a limited infill site within a village.

Turning to Paragraph 155 of the NPPF, the application site is not Grey Belt land, the Council can demonstrate a 5 year supply of housing as well as a score of 138% on the recently published Housing Delivery Test 2023 measurement. With reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework, Policy C1 of the Core Strategy (Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places) sets out that in the south of the borough, the Council will deliver a majority of new homes to reflect its accessibility to the core of the city region and the opportunities that existing for new housing. This would be done by:

- a. Maximising the opportunities that existing to provide new housing in sustainable locations;
- b. Deliver new homes in regeneration areas; and
- c. Focus new housing in or close to key economic growth corridors and town centres.

In accordance with Paragraph 7 of the NPPF, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development, and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner.

Policy JP-C8 of PfE requires new development to be located and designed to enable and encourage walking, cycling and public transport use to reduce the negative effects of car dependency and help deliver high quality, attractive, liveable and sustainable environments.

Linking in with the Council's village view set out above, in this instance, the application site is also located at a much higher topography than the village centre of Milnrow making it a more undesirable walk than if the journey was flat or in a downwards trajectory. The proposed development would not be located within a convenient walking distance of local services and shops which would result in an excess reliance on the private motor vehicle to carry out every day shopping needs for groceries and other amenities. Furthermore, whilst the site is not isolated given its proximity to other existing homes, the application site is rural in nature. There are no footways along the proposed access road once you leave Wildhouse Lane and the access road does not benefit from any street lighting making it an unattractive prospect for pedestrians or cyclists, particularly after dark. As a consequence, it is inevitable that the future occupants would be almost entirely reliant on the private motor vehicle. This would not be satisfactory in terms of the future resident's social well-being.

Moreover, there are bus stops (Birchinley Hall) approximately 0.5km north of the application site and (Croft Head Drive) approximately 0.5km to the south of the application site which provides public transport between Rochdale and Stansfield. However, there are a limited number of buses that travel between these stops and the larger settlements (once every hour), and for that reason there is not a convenient public transport system available for future residents of the proposed dwelling.

Taking these factors together, Officers consider that it is more likely than not that future occupiers of the proposed dwelling would be heavily reliant on the private car. The proposed development would therefore not represent a location which is sustainable and this would be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework because the application site would not be located where the need to travel would be limited.

For the reasons identified above, the unsustainable location of the application site is unacceptable in principle and contrary to Policy C1 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-C8 of PfE and the aims of the NPPF with regards to contributing to sustainable development.

Notwithstanding the above assessment, the NPPF is explicit in that development should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

What results in very special circumstances is not defined within either the NPPF or local policy. There could be a single and substantial factor that clearly outweighs the harms, or a number of seemingly ordinary benefits which, when considered in isolation might not be individually particularly noteworthy, but collectively, clearly outweigh the harms, to amount to 'very special circumstances' existing. The weight given to any particular factor, and their combination, is a matter of planning judgement for the decision taker.

In accordance with Paragraph 153 of the NPPF, this report will evaluate harm to the Green Belt, any other harm and any other considerations, before coming to a conclusion as to whether very special circumstances exist. In assessing harm, the

following weight has been ascribed to each matter either in favour or against the proposed development:

- Neutral;
- Limited;
- Moderate;
- Significant; or
- Substantial.

Core Strategy Planning Policy G4 (Protecting Green Belt land) sets out that the Council will continue to protect from development the following areas of Green Belt; north of the borough, the Pennine rural fringe to the north and east of the borough where its primary role will be to prevent encroachment into the countryside (i.e. land north of Rochdale and Heywood and east of Rochdale).

CS Policy G4 also confirms that development will also be restricted to those limited types of development which are deemed not to be inappropriate by national planning policies unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated.

PfE Policy JP-G9 sets out that *'the beneficial use of the Green Belt will be enhanced where this can be achieved without harm to its openness, permanence or ability to serve its five purposes. In particular, the enhancement of its green infrastructure functions will be encouraged, such as improved public access and habitat restoration, helping to deliver environmental and social benefits for our residents and providing the high quality green spaces that will support economic growth'*.

Harm to the Green Belt

As stated above, the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. Paragraph 153 also states that when considering any planning application, Local Planning Authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. Having established that there is definitional harm, it is necessary to consider other forms of harm to the Green Belt. The next sub sections will therefore consider the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and the impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Impact on Openness

Paragraph 143 of the NPPF sets out the 5 purposes of the Green Belt, one of which is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. This approach is supported by PfE and by virtue of encroaching into the undeveloped countryside in this location, the built form of Summit View cabin and its use as a holiday let, conflicts with the purposes of including land within it.

Paragraph 142 of the Framework sets out that 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. Given that the development has been identified as being inappropriate, the next test is to assess the impact of the development upon the openness of the Green Belt.

Planning Practice Guidance provides further advice on what factors can be taken into account when considering the potential impact of development on openness. This guidance clarifies that assessing this impact requires a judgment based on the

circumstances of the case in question. Furthermore, the guidance gives a number of examples where the courts have identified a number of matters which might need to be taken into account in making the assessment. In summary these include, but are not limited to:

- Openness is capable of having both spatial and visual aspects;
- The duration of the development, and its irremediability;
- The degree of activity likely to be generated, such as traffic generation or use of the land by future occupiers.

As alluded to above, openness is an essential characteristic of the Green Belt that has spatial as well as visual aspects.

The proposal in this instance is for a two storey detached dwelling with associated access and parking, on a piece of open land and one that is currently undeveloped. There is currently no significant screening or vegetation on site and as a consequence the site is visually prominent from public vantage points. In view of the existing site context, the proposed development of the site would reduce the open rural character of the land and so would not preserve the visual or spatial openness of this part of the Green Belt.

The proposed dwelling would be two-storeys high with an overall height of approximately 10 metres and almost all of the building would project above the line of the existing topography. As a result, the building would appear prominent and reduce the open spacious feel of the site.

In terms of harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt, the consideration of openness can involve various factors, relating to a proposals site context, including the visual sensitivity within the landscape and appreciation of such development for example.

In assessing the visual aspect of the proposed development on the openness of the Green Belt, the proposed development would be undeniably exposed in this setting. There would undoubtedly be a greater impact on the visual openness of this Green Belt location by the simple merit of the quantum of development that is proposed compared to that which currently exists. But nonetheless, the courts have held that openness does not imply freedom from any form of development.

In this particular instance, it is also important to recognise that the site is well screened from Wildhouse Lane owing to the existing built environment and bund and landscaping immediately opposite the application site. As a whole it is accepted by Officers that the application site when viewed in conjunction with the surrounding environment would diminish its impact on the overall landscape.

In addition, Public Right of Way MilFp277 runs immediately to the south and west of the application site and this footpath would currently provides uninterrupted viewed into the application site. Whilst the proposed natural screening would assist in shielding the proposed development, it would still be viewed prominently from this public vantage point.

In assessing the spatial harm caused by the proposed development on the Green Belt openness, it is important to recognise that the absence of any significant visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on openness. The spatial openness of the Green Belt is clear around the building to the west but the application

sits in an existing ribbon of development of existing dwellings and buildings. The application site is not isolated when viewed with the surrounding landscape. Nevertheless, the proposed development would result in a reduction in the spatial openness of the application site, and this is harmful to the Green Belt.

Consequently, as outlined above, in both spatial and visual terms the proposal would have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing circumstances on site. Overall, as set out in spatial and visual terms, the proposed development would result in moderate harm to the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt in this location. Accordingly, the proposed dwelling cannot be seen as preserving the openness of the Green Belt and the proposed development is in material conflict with the Frameworks objectives and is harmful to the openness of the Green Belt.

It is now important to consider the impact of the proposal on the purposes that land within the Green Belt should serve.

Impact on purposes

Paragraph 143 of the NPPF sets out that Green Belt Serves the following 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 reserve 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.

A) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

The site comprises an open area of land which sits in an existing ribbon of development through existing residential dwellings and associated paraphernalia. Although contained by urbanising development to the north and south the application site remains open to the west. The site has a sense of openness about it and the siting of the proposed development would alter the visual and spatial aspects of openness in this location.

The development applied for however is not significant enough in size to contribute towards what could be considered to constitute a sprawl of a large built-up area and it would not conflict with this purpose. It is however evident that the development has expanded a built-up area outside of the existing defined urban area.

B) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

The development and application site involved with this application serves no purpose in preventing neighbouring towns merging and as such it would not conflict with this purpose.

C) To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

The site is characterised by its rural environment comprising elements of traditional farm houses/cottages/dwellings to the north and south. Despite the urbanising features adjacent to the site, the site undoubtedly has a strong distinction with the surrounding countryside. The development would therefore result in encroachment into the countryside and would have a moderate impact on this purpose.

D) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

The application site does not abut an identified historic settlement and does not have a physical or visual relationship to the setting or significance of an historic town. The proposed development would not conflict with this purpose.

E) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

The application site does not conflict with this purpose as it does not assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

Openness Conclusion

The development is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and therefore, is harmful by definition. The proposal would conflict with one of the five purposes that Green Belts serve through representing encroachment into the countryside.

In terms of harm caused to the openness of the Green Belt, the consideration of openness can involve various factors, relating to a proposals site context, including the visual sensitivity within the landscape and appreciation of such development for example. Officers have therefore considered the proposal having regard to its individual merits, including its location, scale and form and the site context and the development would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt by creating moderate harm to the openness of the Green Belt as discussed above.

Consequently, the development negatively impacts upon both spatial and visual openness. In conclusion, the conflict with purposes, taken together with the impact upon openness and definitional harm by reason of inappropriateness, culminate that very substantial weight should be attached to the harm to the Green Belt as a result of the proposal.

The development is unacceptable in principle.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF requires analysis of other considerations in the planning balance and these are set out below.

Design and Visual amenity

The NPPF is unambiguous in its stance on the importance of design.

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Paragraph 135 goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Policy P2 states that the Council will protect and enhance the Borough's character, including the quality of its countryside. New development is required to integrate successfully.

The test for development proposals is therefore not whether they avoid bad design, but that they are achieving good design as contained in the National Design Guide (NDG) and National Model Design Code (NMDC) as well as relevant local plan policies.

The proposed development has been designed to be of a scale, massing and appearance that is in keeping with the vernacular character of the local area. The use of a high quality and appropriately produced material palette for the majority of the finish to external elevations is a significant contributor in achieving this. This comes off the back of extensive pre-application discussions with the Council and the DRP.

The proposed layout and site levels have been designed to result in a development which lies well within the landscape, in keeping with the positive character of buildings within the Pennine Fringe area and to be similar to the appearance of the neighbouring buildings. The proposed layout has also been created to enable the creation of a generous landscape buffer between the proposed buildings and the listed building and non-designated assets. Furthermore, planting and landscaping along the northern, southern and west boundaries of the development will feature native species, further softening the transition between the built-up elements and this currently naturalistic open space.

The development proposal will replace an unmanaged and unkempt site which does not enhance the significance and setting of the historic environment. The design approach explained above demonstrates that the proposed development will improve the impact of the site with the significance and setting of the historic environment. Notably, the creation of a naturalistic landscape buffer between the development and the heritage assets will have a positive impact on the setting of those heritage assets.

Overall, the extremely high quality design of the proposed dwelling results in a scheme that supports and emphasises the local vernacular and the proposed materials palette harmonises with the local built environment ensuring that the proposed development integrates seamlessly into the setting and streetscape.

The proposal is considered to be acceptable, and in accordance with Policy JP-P1 of the PfE Joint Development Plan, policies DM1 and P1, P2 and P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and policies contained within the NPPF.

Residential Amenity (Occupier and Neighbouring)

Paragraph 135 of the NPPF states planning decisions should create places which are 'safe, inclusive, and accessible, promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future occupiers'. Policy G9 of the Rochdale CS states all development is required to 'not have impacts that lead to an unacceptable increase in air, water, noise, light or other pollution.'

The Council's Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD refers to Space Standards at Section 4.1, and states the following:

'The following minimum space standards will be applied to all new residential developments and developments which affect existing residential properties:

- (i) 21m between directly facing principal windows of habitable rooms, at an upper floor level AND 10.5m between a principal window at an upper floor level and a directly facing boundary of the curtilage (Figure 2);*
- (ii) 14m between a principal window and any directly facing two storey elevation which does not contain a principal window to a habitable room (Figure 3);*

(iii) 10m between a principal window and any directly facing single storey elevation which does not contain a principal window to a habitable room (Figure 4).'

Section 4.3 states exceptions to these minimum standards are acceptable in some circumstances and applications are considered on their own merits.

Given the design of the building, its orientation, the topography of the wider area and distance from existing dwellings, the space standards here are acceptable. The proposed dwelling is approximately 23.5m away from the nearest dwellinghouse to the north and 30m away from the dwellinghouse to the south and a proposed landscaping buffer would intervene to disturb any potential overlooking.

In terms of occupier amenity, the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) is a technical standards document produced by the Government to ensure internal space within new dwellings is sufficient for future occupiers. Additionally, in accordance with PfE Policy JP-H3 (Type, Size and Design of New Housing), it is a requirement for all new dwellings to comply with the nationally described space standards and be built to the accessible and adaptable standard in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations unless specific site conditions make this impracticable. These standards can be found here and any future development must adhere to the space standards: [Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/technical-housing-standards)

On assessment of the proposed floor plans, the proposed development exceeds NDSS.

With regards to outdoor amenity space for future occupiers, as defined within the Council's Residential Development SPD residential amenity is; *'The benefit enjoyed from physical external space which is part of the private home. The level of enjoyment is dependent on a number of factors, including location, size, orientation, sounds, noise, accessibility and enclosure, and general quality of space.'*

Under paragraph 7.33 of PfE, the provision of appropriate outdoor amenity space is defined as being *'vital in delivering high quality homes that support good health'*.

In addition, the reasonable needs of occupiers would need to be met and these needs are considered to cover both functional and recreational requirements proportionate to the size of the household, taking into account the surrounding context. On reflection of the proposed layout, the proposed residential garden area surrounding the proposed dwelling is exceptional and would clearly provide a significant level of outdoor amenity space.

Accordingly, the development is not considered to impact on neighbouring or occupier amenity and the scheme is considered acceptable in accordance with CS Policies G9 and DM1 and the NPPF.

Highways

Policy T2 of the CS requires development to comply with the Council's car parking standards and policy DM1 requires that development provides satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring and servicing arrangements, taking into account the proposed use and location.

Policy JP-C8 of PfE requires new development to be located and designed to enable and encourage walking, cycling and public transport use to reduce the negative effects of car dependency and help deliver high quality, attractive, liveable and sustainable environments.

Paragraph 115 of the National Planning Policy Framework states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The development is not considered to have an adverse impact on highway safety and would not generate a level of additional traffic which would have a detrimental impact on the safe and efficient operation of the immediate local highway network, or strategic routes. Highways Services have raised no objections subject to condition and the development is considered acceptable in accordance with CS Policies T1 and T2, Policy JP-C8 of PfE and the NPPF.

Ecology

Policy G7 requires that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are given full and appropriate recognition and protection and that opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity will be supported. It is expected that development proposals will protect and include existing biodiversity and take opportunities to promote biodiversity and create new habitats using landscaping and building and construction features wherever possible. CS Policy G7 requires that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity.

PfE Policy JP-G8 seeks to deliver a net enhancement of biodiversity resources through a collective of measures which are broadly aligned with the approach to BNG outlined within the Environment Act (2021), the NPPF and supporting guidance documents. The provisions of the Environment Act in respect of BNG are now a statutory requirement for planning applications and so the proposed development should achieve net gains for biodiversity via species enhancement as guided by the NPPF (paragraphs 180d and 185 b) to achieve demonstrable net gain for biodiversity.

When determining planning applications paragraph 186 of the NPPF sets out that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should also be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable.

As of 2nd April 2024, BNG of 10% for minor planning applications is mandatory for development in England under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. In this instance the applicant has claimed the development to be self-build which falls within the exemptions listed under The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024.

However, in order to meet the self-build exemption, the development must meet the definition provided in the Self-Build and Custom Housebuilding Act (2015) in that such is the case where an individual, an association of individuals, or persons working with or for individuals or associations of individuals, build or complete houses to be occupied as homes by those individuals. Officers are satisfied in this instance that the development meets this definition.

Notwithstanding the above, the provisions of Paragraph 180 of the NPPF and PfE Policy JP-G8 in respect of providing a net gain to biodiversity would still apply to the proposed development. In this regard, the application proposes a landscape led approach to the development which is proposing an exceptionally strong landscaping

scheme comprising of a pond, wildlife enhancement area, native hedging and new tree planting. Overall, the scheme will provide a significant enhancement of biodiversity on this site.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit were consulted on the proposed development and they have no objection subject to conditions controlling invasive species, tree protection, breeding birds, and biodiversity enhancement and landscape specification.

The applicant's attention however is also drawn to the simple recommendations at paragraphs 4.1 and 4.4 of the submitted Ecology Survey in relation to reasonable avoidance measures for amphibians and species of principal importance.

Subject to the inclusion of the conditions, the proposed development is considered to acceptable and would comply with G6 and G7 of the Core Strategy, PfE and the NPPF.

Trees

The NPPF recognises the important contribution of trees to the character and quality of urban environments, and their role in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Policy JP-G2 of the adopted PfE identifies trees and woodland as vital elements of the green infrastructure network and key features of urban green spaces, which Policy JP-G8 seek to protect and enhance through conserving and managing existing trees of heritage and/or aesthetic value. Policy G6 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy sets out provision for enhancing green infrastructure and requires regard to local landscape character and contribute to its conservation or enhancement. Developments should avoid the loss of existing urban greenspace or features e.g. trees unless suitable alternative provision is made, it has limited value and its development or change of use will help meet other sustainability or local regeneration objectives. Additionally, Policy G7 requires developments to protect existing biodiversity including trees and vegetation.

The proposed development in this instance indicates an exceptionally strong replacement planting ratio well above 2:1 in line with Policy G6 of the adopted Core Strategy.

Subject to the inclusion of the conditions, the proposed development is considered to acceptable and would comply with G6 and G7 of the Core Strategy, PfE and the NPPF.

Drainage

Policy G8 requires that new development does not lead to any increased form of flooding locally or further downstream, does not impede natural water and flood risk management, is not detrimental to existing or potential flood storage areas, contributes where possible to alleviating existing flood risk and is itself well protected from flood risk and ensures prudent use of water resources.

Policy JP-S4 (Flood Risk and the Water Environment) of PfE expects developments to manage surface water runoff through sustainable drainage systems and development should achieve greenfield run-off rates unless it is demonstrates to be impracticable.

The site is located within Flood Zone 1, having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding but the site is at risk of surface water flooding.

United Utilities (UU) have been consulted on this application but have not raised any objection. UU have however commented that the site overlies the carboniferous rock, in

a Groundwater Source Protection Zone (SPZ) 2. This forms an aquifer, abstracted at depth by United Utilities for public drinking water supply at Butterworth Hall borehole. A mine shaft anticipated to provide a direct connection to the aquifer is located approximately 30m south of the site. The applicant should follow best practise on their use and storage of fuels, oils and chemicals, to remove the risk of causing pollution during construction.

Owing to subsequent correspondence between the applicant and United Utilities, United Utilities have since advised that they support the proposal to install a private wastewater treatment plant, suitably sized to treat foul flows from the development, prior to discharge to the existing watercourse. The Applicant will require Environment Agency consent for the discharge of treated effluent. United Utilities would not wish to adopt the works on completion.

United Utilities are content with the proposed development subject to conditions.

The LLFA were consulted on this application but they have not provided any comments. To that effect, Officers can confirm that each planning application is assessed uniquely on its own merits. In this instance, the application is not a Major application and the LLFA are therefore not a Statutory Consultee.

Subject to the appropriately worded conditions below, the proposed development is acceptable and would be in accordance with Policy G8 of the Core Strategy and Policies JP-S4 of PfE and the NPPF.

Heritage

Paragraphs 207 and 208 of the NPPF require applicants to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting; and that the level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance; local planning authorities should take this assessment into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.

Paragraph 210 sets out three considerations which local planning authorities should consider when determining applications:

- 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.

Paragraph 212 notes that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Paragraph 213 follows that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification.

PfE Policy JP-J2 (Heritage) sets out that particular consideration will be given to ensure that the significance of key elements of the historic environment which contribute to Greater Manchester's distinctive identity and sense of place are protected from harm. These include historic town centres, places of worship, historic transport routes

including the canal network, industrial buildings and structures including textile mills, farmsteads and other sites, buildings, and areas of identified archaeological, architectural, artistic and/or historic value.

Development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings will be considered having regard to national planning policy. Development proposals which will help safeguard the significance of and secure a sustainable future for Greater Manchester's heritage at risk will be supported in principle, provided they are not contrary to national policy or other policies in the development plan. Proposals should be informed, as necessary, by the findings and recommendations of the appropriate heritage assessment(s) in the development plan evidence base and/or any updated heritage assessment submitted as part of the planning application process.

Amongst other criteria, Policy P2 of the Core Strategy sets out that the Council will protect the boroughs heritage by conserving, enhancing and promoting key heritage assets both statutory and non-statutory, including consideration of their wider settings.

A Heritage Statement accompanies the application which is incorporated within the submitted Design and Access Statement. This has been prepared in recognition of the fact that the proposed development will be located close to a designated and non-designated heritage assets and it assessed the impact of the development proposals on the significance and setting of those assets.

Wildhouse Farm located to the north is Grade II Listed and whilst the proposed development is modern, a contextual design is proposed for the new dwelling which reflects traditional characteristics found in the immediate vicinity including pitched gables and offshoot elements. The proposed use of local materials that resonate with the nearby Listed Building and Wildhouse Lane in general includes the use of Pennine Stone and render.

The proposed positioning and layout of the proposed development ensures that the building is not visible from any key views of the Listed Building along Wildhouse Lane. The overall size, layout and design of the proposed development sustains the significance of the Listed Building and maintains the aspects of its setting that contribute towards its significance.

Due to the orientation of view, topography of the land and intervening development, the proposed development would not be visible in views of the non-designated heritage asset at the Bellavista Restaurant.

With regards to Wildhouse Court in the north, the proposed development would be experienced alongside it. However, its previous use, function and low significance as a former barn to the wider farmstead is not appreciable in these views. It currently appears as a modern dwelling but the setback and position of the new dwelling would ensure that any views of the non-designated heritage asset are un-interrupted.

In making an assessment on any heritage impacts, the Councils Conservation Officer has confirmed that:

"The scheme has been through a number of iterations. The most recent scheme has been considered at pre-app and by the Design Review Panel. The proposal has sought to address some of the concerns raised with the initial pre-application advice enquiry. These include changes to the spread of development across the site, the design of the building, its materiality and overall height."

The revised scheme picks up on features within the local vernacular, such as the simple, rectangular form, gable ends and lean-tos. The material palette also reflects the materials found elsewhere within the fold. The orientation of the property would assist with reducing its visual impact and maintaining an open buffer between the new house and the historic grouping.

It is considered that these elements would all help to reduce its impact on the wider setting of the historic group. It is important that the quality of the scheme is ensured by way of condition. To mitigate any harm, conditions should be imposed requiring material specifications and samples, large scale details of windows (timber or aluminium), doors, eaves, verges and soffits, rainwater goods, glazed panels, links, removal of PD rights for extensions and outbuildings, hard and soft landscaping plans and boundary treatments.

Subject to the above, it is considered that the proposal could achieve a neutral impact on the significance of the identified heritage assets”.

Overall the proposed development would sustain the significance of the Wildhouse Farm and the proposed development sustains and conserve the significance of the listed building and nearby non-designated heritage assets.

Accordingly, subject to condition, the proposed development is acceptable and in accordance with Policy P2 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, PfE Policy JP-J2 and the NPPF.

Energy/Sustainability

Core Strategy Policy G1 sets out measures to address climate change and emissions, whilst Policy G2 requires that new development adhere to the energy hierarchy.

Policy JP-S1 of PfE requires development to aim to maximise its economic, social and environmental benefits simultaneously, minimise its adverse impacts, utilise sustainable construction techniques and actively seek opportunities to secure net gains across each of the different objectives.

Places for Everyone policy JP-S2 sets out expectations for developments to minimise carbon emissions, following the energy hierarchy, and incorporating renewable energy and EV charging. JP-S2 has replaced existing policies within the Rochdale Core Strategy which related to these considerations.

Greater Manchester’s vision is to be at the forefront of action on climate change and to make its fair contributions to international commitments by becoming a carbon neutral city region by 2038. To meet this target, PfE endorses the following commitments:

- Be carbon neutral by 2038
- Hold cumulative carbon dioxide emissions to without the carbon budget
- Initiate a programme of mitigation to reduce emissions including by:
 - Significantly upscaling solar photovoltaic energy;
 - Reducing heat demand in homes;
 - Moving away from carbon intensive gas as the primary source of heat;
 - Reducing heating and cooling demand for public and commercial buildings;

- Increasing biofuel use;
- Enable sustainable choices for travel and decarbonise transport;
- Significantly upscaling building retrofit; and
- Increase the delivery of nature-based solutions and biodiversity net gain.

Paragraph 166 of the NPPF sets out that “*In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should expect new development to:*

- a) Comply with any development plan policies on local requirements for decentralised energy supply unless it can be demonstrated by the applicant, having regard to the type of development involved and its design, that this is not feasible or viable; and*
- b) Take account of landform, layout, building orientation, massing and landscaping to minimise energy consumption”.*

The application is accompanied by an Overheating Assessment and the development proposes to install Photovoltaics on the south facing roof slopes.

The proposed development is *outstanding and of a design which promote high levels of sustainability* in accordance with Paragraph 139(b) of the NPPF.

The proposed development was assessed to comply with the requirements of Part O of the Building Regulations and the proposed development is capable of achieving Passivhaus standards and neutral energy consumption.

The proposal would be satisfactory in terms of the objectives of PfE policy JP-S2 and NPPF paragraph 166(b).

VERY SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A Court of Appeal judgement in Redhill Aerodrome Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government establishes that ‘any other harm’ in paragraph 153 of the NPPF includes non-Green Belt harm that is to be taken into account in the weighing exercise of the planning balance as to determining whether or not very special circumstances exist which would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by inappropriateness and any other harm.

This Court of Appeal judgment is an important reminder that under paragraph 153 of the NPPF, when considering any planning application concerning proposed development in the Green Belt, LPAs should continue to ensure that substantial weight is given to harm to the Green Belt and any other harm.

In light of the above assessment, it is necessary to now consider whether there are ‘very special circumstances’ which clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt (arising from the inappropriate development discussed above) and any other harm resulting from the proposal as set out in paragraph 153 of the NPPF.

In the submitted Green Belt Assessment, the applicant considered that if Officers did not share the view that the proposed development benefitted from a Green Belt exception then very special circumstances would apply. The applicant has therefore presented their own VSC case which focuses on the high quality design of the proposed dwelling.

Officers also consider that there are very special circumstances in this instance which are site specific and are set out below.

High Quality Design and the Design Review Panel

Prior to the submission of this application the applicant undertook extensive pre-application discussions with the LPA and The Design Review Panel (DRP) in a collaborative approach.

The proposed development here has been design-led providing the opportunity for the delivery of a single bespoke dwelling to sit comfortably on the site in an attractive context.

The Design Review Panel were asked to comment on the proposals against the requirements of paragraph 139 (specifically clause b) of the Framework which sets out:

“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings”.*

It is acknowledged that this application is not using paragraph 84(e) of the NPPF as a justification in support of the proposed development. Despite the proposed development undergoing extensive design discussions, the proposed development is not submitted as a design of exceptional quality in that for the purposes of paragraph 84(e) it is:

- is truly outstanding, reflecting the highest standards in architecture, and would help to raise standards of design more generally in rural areas; and*
- would significantly enhance its immediate setting, and be sensitive to the defining characteristics of the local area.*

Paragraph 84 in any case relates to the development of isolated homes in the countryside and as established at pre-application:

“The site is located in a slightly isolated location, in that it is located outside of the defined urban area and is set further back from Wildhouse Lane, behind foliage. However, the site is approximately 150m from the nearest development within the defined urban area, there are eight properties located in the small enclave including buildings sited on either side of the applicant site and the Bellavista restaurant. Additionally, it is noted that the row of properties in the enclave neighbour a residential area that is sited within the defined urban area. In 2018 the Court of Appeal upheld a

High Court decision, with the central question of the appeal being the definition of 'isolated' in the expression 'new isolated homes in the countryside'. It was noted that the word 'isolated' should be given its ordinary meaning of 'far away from other places, buildings or people; remote'. Considering the judgment it can be considered that the site is not 'isolated' and therefore Paragraph 80 (now 84) is not considered to be directly relevant for the purposes of this application".

It is recognised that the proposed development is submitted having had feedback from The Design Review Panel on 2 separate occasions. On this occasion the DRP have commented that the new design is a significant improvement on the previous iteration. The development was described as being refreshingly contemporary whilst at the same time firmly rooted within the local vernacular. The new dwelling should sit comfortably in its context through the use of traditional materials which helps to anchor the building in its local context. Aesthetically the proposed building is very appealing. The patchwork of solids and voids of different sizes works well and the use of familiar local materials will help the building to sit comfortably within its context.

The analysis of local settlement character and vernacular as included within the submitted Heritage Statement have demonstrated that a building of this scale and massing can be accommodated comfortably on site and the submitted landscaping plan helps facilitate the development fully with its surroundings which is a view shared by the Councils Conservation Officer who was also subject to the DRP conversations and meetings.

The DRP supports the proposal for a super-insulated building aspiring to Passivhaus standards. An overheating assessment has been submitted with the application and the proposed model was assessed to comply with the requirements of Part O. The development is capable of achieving Passivhaus standards and neutral energy consumption.

The DRP concluded that the revised design since initial conception demonstrates significant improvement and the revised architectural approach is supported by the Panel. It is unashamedly contemporary but at the same time feels comfortable in its historic vernacular setting. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is a truly unique development of innovative design that reflects the highest standard of architecture. The development accords with Paragraph 139 (b) of the NPPF.

The development is of an outstanding design that would significantly contribute to the setting of the locality and would promote high levels of sustainability and help raise the standard of design more generally in this area. Significant weight is therefore afforded to the proposed development in this regard.

Environmental

The NPPF sets out in paragraphs 7 and 8 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, with an environmental objective element being one of three key elements of sustainable development.

A key part of environmental sustainability relates to the natural environment and its biodiversity. The application is accompanied by an Ecological Survey which sets out that the site is a cleared site containing a marshy strip, large areas of tall herb, low vegetation, some neutral grassland and some disturbed ground around former trenches with vegetation termed ephemeral/short perennial.

The proposed development here would bring about significant environmental benefits two-fold. Firstly, the provision of a dwelling that would produce neutral energy consumption and be of a highly sustainable construction. Secondly, the proposed development seeks to incorporate an enhanced wildlife zone which includes a rain garden and pond as well as a landscape led approach comprising of native hedgerows, aquatic plants, wildflower meadows and tree planting.

Therefore, as well as mitigating against any ecological harm, the proposed development would deliver significant environmental benefits by way of ecological benefits in terms of improving the biodiversity on site. The existing site is unmanaged and the development proposal looks to incorporate native planting and landscape buffers as well as the introduction of an enhanced wildlife zone. The proposed planting will inevitably perform much better in environmental terms compared to the existing unmanaged site.

Overall the development would significantly enhance biodiversity on site thereby contributing considerably towards the delivery of sustainable environmental development as per the guidance set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF. Moderate weight is therefore afforded to this.

Social

The Core Strategy identifies in Policy C3 that there is a demand for higher value housing in Rochdale, particularly in the north of the borough where this application site is located. This application represents an opportunity for development which will deliver a high value home and the site has characteristics and context which lend themselves to the delivery of higher value housing.

The location of the site within an attractive landscape whilst being located with sustainable access to local goods and services, makes the site particularly attractive and unique in terms of land available for housing in the north of the borough.

In accordance with the aspirations of Core Strategy policy C3 and the aims of paragraph 61 of the NPPF. This will contribute towards the delivery of sustainable social development as per the guidance set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF and limited weight is afforded to this.

Economical

The proposed dwelling would lead to an increase in local expenditure helping to support the local economy albeit through a small contribution and the proposed development would also generate greater council tax receipts for the Council. This will contribute towards the delivery of sustainable social development as per the guidance set out in paragraphs 7 and 8 of the NPPF and limited weight is afforded to this.

Heritage

A Heritage Statement incorporated into the Design and Access Statement accompanies this application.

This statement establishes that *“there is limited visual relationship between the application site and the listed building due to the topography of the land, intervening development, and mature planting. Only the upper storey of the modern rebuilt section of the listed building is experienced from the site. This does not allow for any appreciation or understanding of the significance of Wildhouse Farm or the nearby non-*

designated heritage assets. The application site in its current form no longer makes any meaningful contribution towards the significance of Wildhouse Farm or the non-designated Wildhouse Court and Bellavista Restaurant. With reference to paragraph 212 of the NPPF, although the site part of the setting and physical surroundings of the heritage assets, it is not an aspect that contributes to their significance”.

The Council's Conservation Officer notes that the revised scheme “*now picks up on features within the local vernacular, such as the simple, rectangular form, gable ends and lean-tos. The material palette also reflects the materials found elsewhere within the fold. The orientation of the property would assist with reducing its visual impact and maintaining an open buffer between the new house and the historic grouping.*

It is considered that these elements would all help to reduce its impact on the wider setting of the historic group. It is important that the quality of the scheme is ensured by way of condition. To mitigate any harm, conditions should be imposed requiring material specifications and samples, large scale details of windows (timber or aluminium), doors, eaves, verges and soffits, rainwater goods, glazed panels, links, removal of PD rights for extensions and outbuildings, hard and soft landscaping plans and boundary treatments”.

With regards to proposals affecting heritage assets, the NPPF sets out in paragraph 203 requirement for local authorities to take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets, as well as the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character.

Similarly, paragraph 187 of the NPPF requires that planning decision contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, specifically including the recognition of the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside in this requirement.

Whilst the heritage and landscape benefits are considered significant in their own right, they have been considered together given the same way in which they help the development to reduce the harm to the Green Belt and to secure the significant benefits of the proposed development.

The creation of the landscape buffer area will allow the delivery the significant enhancement to the historic and natural environments and the applicant has recognised this and through this application they seek to maximise these benefits in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF.

The Council's Conservation Officer comments that the proposal could achieve a neutral impact on the significance of the identified heritage assets. The proposed introduction of natural planting will enhance the landscape character of the site and surrounding area. In this respect, the proposed inclusion of this landscape buffer within the proposed development will have significant heritage and landscape benefits, in accordance with Core Strategy policies SO3, C1, P2, P3, G4 and G6 and neutral weight is attributed to this.

Concluding Comments

The NPPF requires that Green Belt development which is not otherwise considered appropriate must be justified by demonstrating that the potential for harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations, referred to here as the very special circumstances.

There is no definitive guidance in the NPPF, PPG or any other material policy and guidance which defines what constitutes very special circumstances. Indeed, each site and each proposed development must be assessed on its own merits. This is a reflection of the sometimes complex and sometimes subjective nature of very special circumstances.

This assessment has therefore been prepared with reference to the fact that the NPPF sets out in paragraph 142 that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts and has assessed the benefits of the development proposal and the potential harm caused in accordance with the Development Plan.

In summation, the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Whilst substantial weight is to be given to any harm to the Green Belt, this is to be set against the contribution of the proposal and due to the proposed exceptionally high quality design, proximity to existing development, social, ecological, environmental, economic and heritage benefits, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt would be outweighed by an accumulation of VSCs as demonstrated above.

Accordingly, the assessment above establishes that the proposed development will enable the delivery of a number of differing but positive benefits which together accumulatively form the very special circumstances that outweigh the identified Green Belt harm.

Conclusion

To conclude, the proposed development is inappropriate development in the Green Belt and whilst substantial weight is to be given to any harm to the Green Belt, this is to be set against the contribution of the proposal and due to the proposed exceptionally high quality design, proximity to existing built development, social, ecological, environmental, economic and heritage benefits, the harm to the openness of the Green Belt would be outweighed by an accumulation of VSCs as demonstrated above.

Officers therefore conclude that all considerations in this case clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt that has been identified. Looking at the case as a whole, it is considered that very special circumstances exist which would justify the development overall.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The development must be begun not later than three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and documents:
 - Location Plan Drawing No 07 Rev A
 - Existing Site Plan Drawing No 01 Rev A
 - Proposed Site Plan Drawing No 05 Rev E
 - Proposed Site Plan Drawing No 10 Rev C
 - Proposed Elevations Drawing No 03 Rev F
 - Proposed Elevation Section Drawing No 14 Rev A

- Proposed Elevation Section Drawing No 15 Rev A
- *Proposed Elevation Drawing No 16 Rev A*
- Proposed Elevation Drawing No 17 Rev A
- Cross Section Drawing No 18
- Cross Section Drawing No 19
- Street Scene Drawing No 20 Rev A
- Landscape Proposals Drawing No 26
- Planning Statement and Green Belt Policy Statement Dated November 2024
- Heritage Statement Dated January 2024
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment Dated
- Overheating Study AG-78035-TM59-Rev A Dated 22nd July 2024
- Design and Access Statement
- Energy and Sustainability Statement Referenced Z63362

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure a satisfactory standard of development in accordance with the policies contained within the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the saved Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. No above ground works shall commence until samples of all external facing and roofing materials (notwithstanding any details shown on previously submitted plans) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All works shall be undertaken strictly in accordance with the details as approved and retained as approved thereafter. For the avoidance of doubt, these details should relate to windows, doors, eaves, verges, soffits, rainwater goods, glazed panels, elevation materials.

Reason: In order to ensure use of appropriate materials which are sympathetic to the character of the building and the surrounding area in the interests of visual amenity and heritage and to comply with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies P1, P2 and P3 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

4. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) (Schedule 2, Part 1, Classes A, B, C, D, E) or any subsequent re-enactment thereof, no extension to the dwelling, porch, garden shed, greenhouse, garage or car port shall be erected nor any hardstanding area extended other than those expressly authorised by this permission.

Reason: The design of the proposed development hereby approved attracts significant weight in this Green Belt location and the introduction of extensions and further built development without due consideration of the appearance of the dwelling could undermine the architectural qualities of this proposal.

5. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved, full details of the alignment, height and appearance of all fences and walls to be erected to the site boundaries (notwithstanding any such detail shown on previously submitted plans) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied before all walls and fences have been erected in accordance with the approved details. Fences and walls shall thereafter be retained in accordance with the approved details at all times.

Reason: In order to ensure use of appropriate materials which are sympathetic to the character of the building and the surrounding area in the interests of visual amenity and heritage and to comply with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies P1, P2 and P3 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

6. Prior to first occupation of the development hereby approved, full details of the colour, form and texture of all hard landscaping (ground surfacing materials) (notwithstanding any such detail shown on previously submitted plans and specification) shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All works shall be undertaken strictly in accordance with the details as approved, and shall be completed in all respects before the final completion of the development and thereafter retained.

Reason: In order to ensure use of appropriate materials which are sympathetic to the character of the building and the surrounding area in the interests of visual amenity and heritage and to comply with the requirements of Core Strategy Policies P1, P2 and P3 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

7. Notwithstanding the details shown on the approved Landscape Proposals Drawing No 26, no above ground works shall commence until a further soft landscaping scheme and specification has been submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

For the avoidance of any doubt, any submission shall also include details of the proposed rain garden and pond, including cross section drawings. The scheme must include a specification of the aquatic plants to be provided and a cross section of the pond should be provided. The pond must be created and stocked with locally native species from a reliable stockist.

The scheme should also indicate the types and numbers of trees, plants and shrubs to be planted, their distribution and arrangement on the site and those areas to be seeded.

All proposed planting shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details within the first planting and seeding seasons following the completion of the development. Any trees, plants or shrubs which within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

Reason: To ensure that the site is satisfactorily landscaped having regard to its location and the nature of the proposed development and in accordance with Policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core, Policies JP-P1 and JP-G2 of the Places for Everyone Plan and the NPPF.

8. Prior to the commencement of the development, a detailed construction management plan outlining working practices during construction shall be submitted for approval in writing by the Council, as Local Planning Authority, which for the avoidance of doubt should include:
 - Display of an emergency contact number;
 - Details of Wheel Washing;
 - Dust Management Plan;
 - Compound locations where relevant;

- Location, removal and recycling of waste;
- Routing strategy, vehicular access point, vehicular activity associated with construction and swept path analysis; and,
- Parking of construction vehicles and staff.

The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved construction management plan throughout the construction period.

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of nearby residents and businesses, highway safety and air quality, pursuant to policies DM1 and T2 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Reason for Pre-commencement Condition: Construction/clearance works on-site have the potential to impact residential health and amenity, and the natural environment/habitats from the initial stages. Appropriate safeguards should therefore be put in place prior to works starting.

9. Prior to the commencement of development, details of a sustainable surface water drainage scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Prior to occupation of the proposed development, the drainage scheme shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and retained thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To promote sustainable development, secure proper drainage and to manage the risk of flooding and pollution.

Reason for pre-commencement condition: Drainage infrastructure will need to be implemented prior to commencement of above ground works and a scheme therefore needs to be agreed in advance of the same.

10. No development (including any demolition, site clearance or preparation works) shall take place until a detailed method statement for the removal or long-term management/eradication of invasive non-native (alien) species of plant on the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The method statement shall include measures to prevent the spread of invasive non-native (alien) species of plant during any operations such as mowing, strimming or soil movement, and measures to ensure that any soils brought to the site are free of the seeds/roots/stems of any invasive plant covered under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason: In accordance with policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and Policy JP-G8 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and to ensure the satisfactory treatment and disposal of invasive plant species which, under the terms of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it is an offence to be caused to be spread in the wild.

Reason for pre-commencement condition: Construction activity increases the risk of invasive species spreading.

11. Prior to the commencement of any earthworks or vegetation clearance, all trees to be retained shall be protected in accordance with British Standard BS

5837:2012 or any subsequent amendment to the British Standard. The fencing shall be retained throughout the period of construction and no activity prohibited by BS:5837:2012 shall take place within such protective fencing during the construction period.

Reason: To safeguard the trees to be retained in accordance with Policy G6 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Reason for Pre-commencement Condition: Construction works on site have the potential to impact trees from the initial stages, and therefore need to be protected prior to works starting on site.

12. No clearance of log piles, trees, undergrowth and shrubs in preparation for (or during the course of) development shall take place during the bird nesting season (March - August inclusive) unless an ecological survey has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority to establish whether the site is utilised for bird nesting. Should the survey reveal the presence of any nesting species, then no development shall take place during the period specified above unless a mitigation strategy has first been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority which provides for the protection of nesting birds during the period of works on site.

Reason: In order to prevent any habitat disturbance to nesting birds in accordance with policy G7 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-G8 of PfE and the National Planning Policy Framework.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition (biodiversity gain condition) that development may not begin unless:

- a) A Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority,
- and;
- b) The planning authority has approved the plan.

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan, if one is required in respect of this permission would be Rochdale Council.

Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will not require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because one or more of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements in the list below is/are considered to apply.

The proposed development is a Self and Custom Build Development, meaning development which:

- (i) Consists of no more than 9 dwellings;
- (ii) Is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares;

and;

- (iii) Consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding (as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015).

Informative

In the interests of highway safety and to ensure the continued functionality of the wider highway network, any apparent damage to the highways within the vicinity of the site as a result of any construction traffic associated with this approval, should be remedied prior to occupation of the development hereby approved.

Procedure Statement

The proposal complies with the development plan and would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. It therefore comprises sustainable development and the Local Planning Authority worked proactively to issue the decision without delay.