

## DELEGATED DECISION CHECKLIST AND REPORT

**APPLICATION NO.**

25/00282/FUL

**CASE OFFICER**

Sam Yuen

**DETERMINATION DATE** 10.06.2025 **EXT OF TIME** 20.06.2025

**Address:** Land Adjacent To Bank Top Farm, Hollingworth Road, Littleborough  
Rochdale, OL15 0AU

**Proposal:** Retrospective planning application for a new farm track

|           |                            |   |                       |     |
|-----------|----------------------------|---|-----------------------|-----|
| PUBLICITY | Weekly list expired?       | Y | Site notice expired?  | Y   |
|           | Neighbour letters expired? | Y | Press Notice expired? | N/A |

|            |                                                             |   |                                        |   |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------|---|
| 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?      | N |

|     |                                                  |     |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|-----|
| EIA | Screening opinion completed and saved to Onbase? | N/A |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------|-----|

|            |                                                                      |     |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| CONDITIONS | Pre-commencement conditions proposed?                                | N   |
|            | Pre-commencement conditions agreed (or notification period expired)? | N/A |

**RECOMMENDATION**

**GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS**

**CHECKED AND SIGNED OFF BY:** TH      **DATE:** 25.06.2025

## **SITE**

The application relates to an open field to the south of Bank Top Farm, a working livestock farm located in Littleborough. The site is accessible via an existing farm track and is located some 200m north of Hollingworth Road. The application site and land associated with the farm is located within the Green Belt.

The site occupies a relatively elevated position on a plateau set above the farm, with views available towards Littleborough and beyond towards Rochdale. To the east of the site the land becomes more undulating and leads towards the South Pennine Moors. The predominant land use within the immediate area is agricultural, with agricultural fields and moorland presenting an open character. The urban area of Littleborough is located to the west of the site with Hollingworth Lake to the south.

## **PROPOSAL**

Retrospective planning permission is sought for the formation of a new farm track which extends from the farm's entrance circa 105m to the south-east and turning north-east along a dry stone wall boundary circa 127m up to the northern corner of the adjacent parcel of farm land. In total, the track measures 230m long, 2.8m wide and 435mm deep and is used solely for agricultural purposes.

## **RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY**

### **National Guidance**

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)  
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 21<sup>st</sup> March 2024. The following policies are relevant:

**Policy JP-G9** The Green Belt

**Policy JP-P1** Sustainable Places

### **Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):**

- E6** Supporting and diversifying the rural economy
- P3** Improving design of new development
- G8** Managing water resources and flood risk
- G9** Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land stability
- DM1** General development requirements

## **RELEVANT SITE HISTORY**

N/A

## **CONSULTATION RESPONSES**

### **Highways and Engineering**

No objections.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

Neighbour notifications via letters were sent to surrounding properties and a site notice was posted. No comments were received.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **Principle of Development**

The application seeks retrospective planning permission for the formation of a new farm track to land associated with Bank Top Farm. Policy E6 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy aims to support the rural economy by supporting agricultural activities which help to sustain economic activity whilst maintaining and improving the appearance and rural character of the Borough's countryside. The proposed works would enable agricultural activities to take place on the track, including the transportation of livestock, movement of farm manure and fertiliser, harvesting of crops and any other associated agricultural operations which require the movement of agricultural vehicles on the land.

The proposed works would therefore facilitate the continuing operations and development of the farm and would be acceptable in accordance with Policy E6 of the adopted CS.

### ***Green Belt***

The application site is allocated as Green Belt under Policy JP-G9 of the recently adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, which establishes a revised Green Belt in the Borough and supersedes Policy G/D/2 of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan and Policy G4 of the Rochdale Core Strategy. Policy JP-G9 does not set out specific requirements for development proposals within the Green Belt and as such the provisions of the NPPF apply.

Paragraph 153 of the NPPF establishes that, as with previous Green Belt policy, *“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.”*

Paragraph 154 of the NPPF establishes that *“development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless one of the following exceptions applies:*

- a) *buildings for agriculture and forestry;*
- 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;*
- c) *the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;*
- d) *the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;*
- e) *limited infilling in villages;*
- f) *limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and*
- g) *limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed use including residential), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt*
- h) *Other forms of development provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:*
  - i. *mineral extraction;*
  - ii. *engineering operations;*
  - iii. *local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;*
  - iv. *the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;*
  - v. *material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and*
  - vi. *development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.*

Therefore, the main consideration in assessing the principle of development is whether the proposed scheme constitutes inappropriate development within the Green Belt and, if so, whether very special circumstances have been demonstrated which may outweigh the presumption against development.

Whilst the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 does not contain a statutory definition for ‘engineering operations’, case law describes it as “an operation which would generally be supervised by an engineer”, but does not actually have to be supervised by an engineer. The reshaping of land and movement of earth is generally considered to fall under within this definition. The proposed farm track would thus constitutes engineering operations which would be subject to the test of ‘openness’ under Paragraph 154 of the Framework.

*Openness*

Paragraph 142 of the NPPF 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 their permanence.”*

“Openness”, for the purpose of Green Belt policy is not formally defined within Planning Policy or legislation but is taken to mean the absence of built development. The term “openness”, comprises a spatial and visual component which should be assessed in considering whether a proposal preserves the openness of the Green Belt.

The proposal would result in the formation of farm track over the existing grassland. Notwithstanding, the proposed plans indicate no buildings or changes in ground level would result from the works. The track would also be understood to be closely associated with the adjacent existing complex of farm buildings and equipment. As such, the proposed engineering operations is not considered to have significant harm to the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt.

#### *Planning Balance*

In light of the above assessment, it is considered the proposed development would meet inappropriate development exception (h) of Paragraph 154 which would allow for engineering operations provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. 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. No harm through inappropriateness has been identified and no additional harm with regard to the openness of the Green Belt has been identified. The proposal therefore accords with the Policy JP-G9 of the PfE and the National Planning Policy Framework.

#### *Other Considerations*

No concerns have been identified relating to the design of the farm track, which is consistent with the appearance of similar associated agricultural works. Likewise, the proposal would not result in undue amenity impacts to surrounding properties. The proposal therefore accords with Policies DM1 and P3 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the PfE and the NPPF.

The supporting statement has also noted the proposed track will prevent soil run off and erosion and prevent dirty water from entering the water system. The proposal therefore accords with Policies G8 and G9 which seeks to manage water resources and reduce the impact of water pollution.

#### **RECOMMENDATION: Grant subject to conditions**

1. The permission relates to the following plans:

- ② Location Plan, Proposed Site Plan and Section Plan – drawing no. DAV.1103.3633.01 received 20/03/2025
- ② Existing Site Plan – drawing no. DAV.1103.3633.02 received 14/04/2025

☐ Land Holding Plan – received 20/03/2025

and the development shall be carried out in accordance with these drawings hereby approved.

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 adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **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.

Report Author Sam Yuen