

Rochdale Borough Council
Planning and Development
Number One Riverside
Smith Street
Rochdale
OL16 1XU

Our Ref: OP/22-042C/LA
23rd March 2026
Rev A (14.04.2026)

Dear Planning and Development,

RE: QUEENS DRIVE, KIRKHOLT – CHANGE OF USE APPLICATION

On behalf of our client, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), we submit a full planning application with details of the following development;

Full application for the Change of Use of land ('no lawful use' to 'Sui Generis') to provide new Community Gardens land.

To enable you to consider the proposed development, we enclose the following plans and information together with this written statement;

Validation Requirements		
Submission Title	Current Dwg ref no.	Size / Scale
Location Plan	22-042C_01A	1:1250 @ A4
Site Topographical Survey	22-042C_02A	1:500 @ A3
Existing Site Plan	22-042C_03A	1:500 @ A3
Proposed Site Plan	22-042C_04A	1:500 @ A3
Site Sections	22-042C_05A	1:500 @ A3
PEA & BNG Assessment	-	-

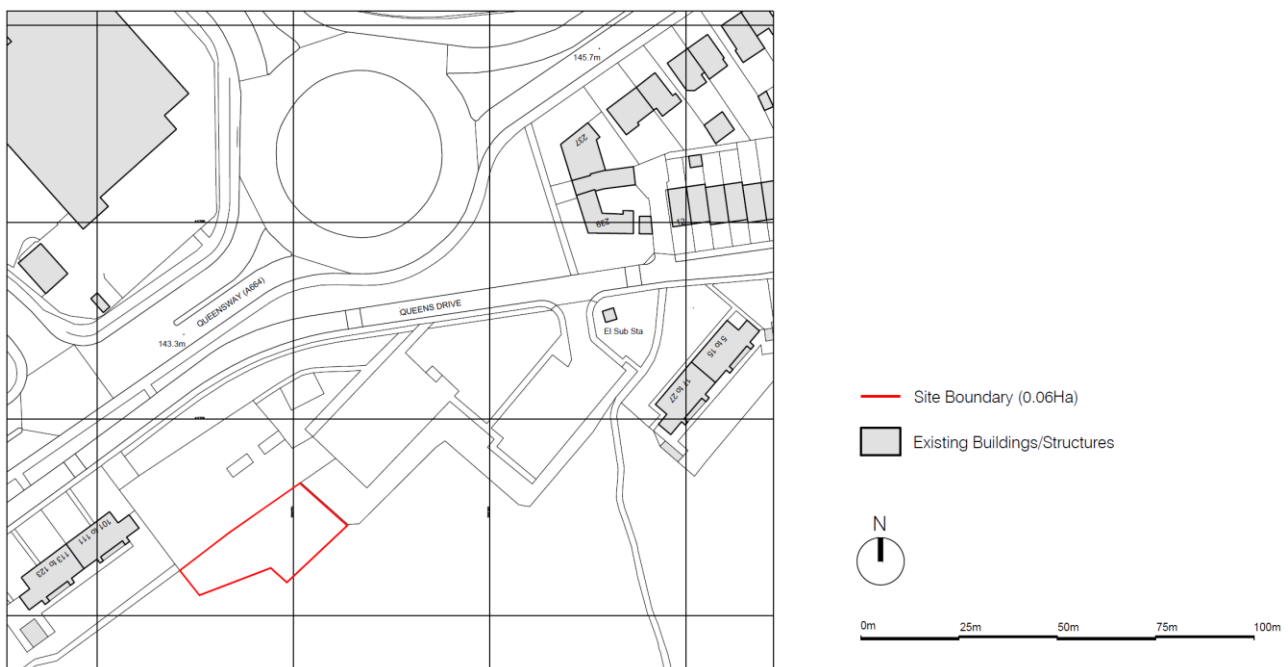
Site Description & Context

The application relates to the Change of Use of a small parcel of land (approx. 0.06Ha) which lies to the south of Queens Drive, within the Kirkholt area of Rochdale, (postcode OL11 2NW), approximately 1.6km south-west of Rochdale town centre. The site itself is bounded to the south by dense woodland and existing designated 'Green Network' land, to the north-east by the former Kirkholt Medical Centre site and to the north-west by the 'QGardens' Community Gardens site, who will ultimately be the beneficiaries of the proposed use of the land.

The application is being submitted in parallel with the adjacent Queens Drive development, by MSV Housing Group, for the development of 28no. total units for affordable rent. The MSV development is proposed to occupy a proportion of the existing Community Gardens site, and the Change of Use application land is therefore sought to facilitate the accommodation of the QGardens group.

Refer to dwg no.'s: 22-042C_03A & 04A (Existing Site Plan & Proposed Site Plan) for details.

The application is for the Change of Use of land, from 'no lawful use' to 'Sui Generis', with the QGardens group set to occupy the land as an extension and reconfiguration of their existing site. The application site is currently under the ownership of Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH), who will be duly notified of the Planning Application. RBH have been fully supportive of the development proposals and have welcomed the change of use of the land to accommodate the Community Gardens group.



Extract from dwg no.: 22-042C 01A Location Plan, site boundary outlined in red.

Planning Context and History

A brief review of Rochdale Borough Council's public access system has revealed no live applications on the site; there is no overall planning history of the site. The adjacent Community Gardens site was subject to a planning application for its formation in 2010, inclusive of the erection of fencing, cabins and greenhouses, following the demolition of a series of apartment buildings that formerly occupied their site:

- 10/D52917 February 2010 Change of Use of land to form Allotments

National Planning Policy Framework

National planning policy for England is set out in the Government's **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, latest update December 2024. The NPPF has three overarching objectives in contributing to the achievement of sustainable development, these are:

- a) *An Economic Objective* – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places.
- b) *A Social Objective* – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities ... with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities health, social and cultural well-being.
- c) *An Environmental Objective* – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land improving biodiversity and using natural resources prudently.

The proposed use of the site, as community gardens land, will benefit the local community and enhance the quality of community spaces within the borough. Paragraph 96 of the NPPF highlights the fundamental aims of achieving the social objectives, stating that '*planning decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction ... and support healthy lives*'. The paragraph explicitly references allotment land as a benefit to social wellbeing, through the promotion of good health.

Paragraph 103 emphasises the benefits of open and recreational spaces for communities, highlighting that '*access to a network of high-quality open spaces ... is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change*'.

Paragraph 154 discusses appropriate development within the realm of existing Green Infrastructure, explicitly highlighting allotment land as an appropriate use of land, including within the context of a Change of Use. It states that acceptable development includes '*the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including ... allotments; as long as the facilities do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it*'. The adjacent land use already falls under allotment and community gardens, so there will be no conflict with surrounding land uses.

Local Planning Policy

The Rochdale Adopted Core Strategy (2016) was adopted in October 2016, and alongside the 'saved' policies from the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 2006, constitute **The Local Plan** for Rochdale. The site doesn't fall within a designated conservation area and there are no listed buildings on site. Review of historic mapping and imagery of the site suggest that it hasn't previously been developed upon. The site is identified within the Rochdale Local Plan, designated as 'Open Space' (PE10) and within 'Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure' (G7). As such, the following policies are relevant to the application:

- Policy PE10 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Facilities
- Policy G7 Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Policy PE10 states the need *'to ensure that the borough's network of open space is protected, managed and enhanced for formal and informal recreation'*. The site forms a small parcel of a much larger area of land that is designated as 'Open Space' under Policy PE10, located on the northern boundary of the designation. The site itself is inaccessible to the general public, bounded by palisade metal fencing to the northern boundaries and was significantly overgrown with dogwood and dense shrubbery. While this vegetation has been cleared in order to assist in the facilitation of the application, the vegetation was of low quality (See Preliminary Ecological Appraisal) and therefore the community benefits offered through *'visual amenity and connection with nature'* (Draft Local Plan, Paragraph 10.61) were minimal. The proposed use of the land as community gardens space significantly enhances the direct benefits of the land, by providing and enhancing a site that is *'accessible to the public and performs a role in the local community'* (Paragraph 10.64), while also removing a potential source of antisocial behaviour through the previously unmanaged, hidden site.



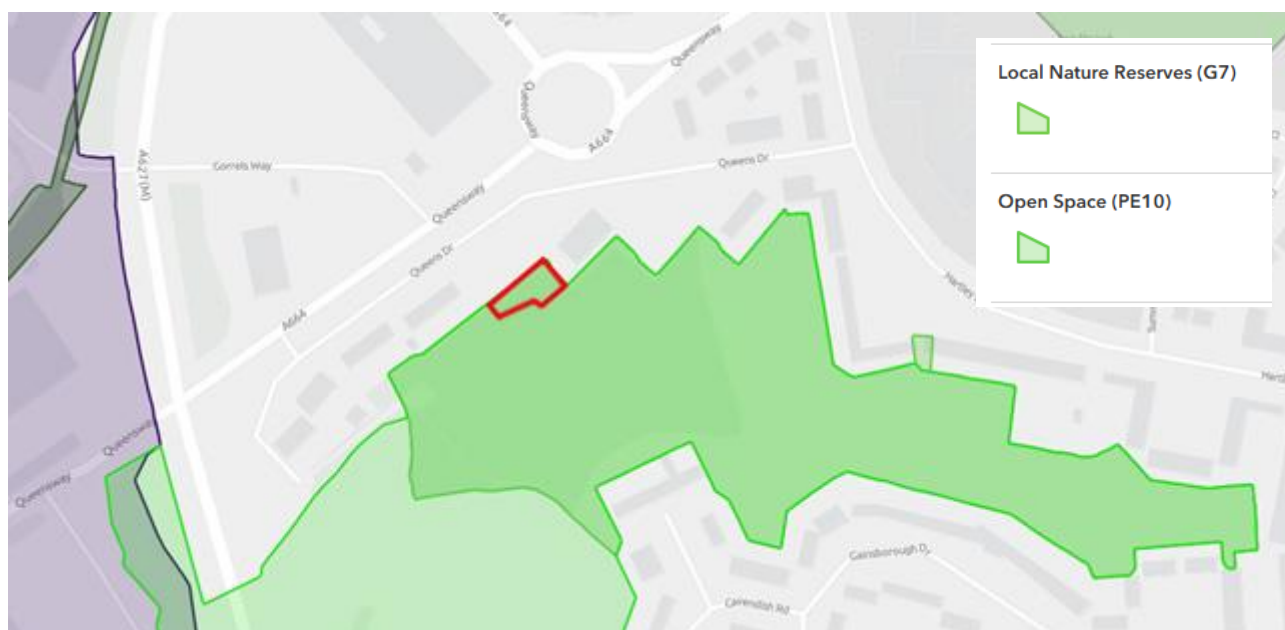
Dense vegetation (now cleared) on the application site (beyond fence line), as viewed from the QGardens community gardens site.

Policy G7 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) covers the protection and enhancement of biodiversity within the Borough, with anticipation that developments will ‘*protect and include existing biodiversity within new developments*’ and ‘*take opportunities to promote biodiversity*’ (Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy G7). In line with Policy G7, statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will also apply to the application. BNG policy was introduced in 2024, mandating a 10% gain in biodiversity units across a development site, delivered and maintained over a 30-year period, achieved through on-site development, off-site development or the purchase of statutory credits (UK Parliament, POSTnote 728).

While designated under ‘Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure’ on the Rochdale Local Plan Policies Map, the site consisted of ‘mixed scrub’ which is only considered to be of medium ecological value. Please see accompanying *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)* and *Biodiversity Statement* produced by Rachel Hacking Ecology, for further details of relevant mitigation and enhancement measures. The BNG metric and calculation process is still in its infancy, and as such the current calculation method offers a rigid view on the contributions of different land classifications. The proposed community gardens are classified as ‘low distinctiveness’, however the flexibility of future site activity (such as provision of orchard space) isn’t accounted for.

Despite this, the overall BNG losses are minimal, and are anticipated to be mitigated through the provision of off-site credits. Regarding the required site clearance, the PEA states that the mixed scrub type is “common and widespread, and considering the small size of the site, it’s removal is assessed as a negative impact at site level only”. The BNG report finds that the works will result in a loss of only 0.01 Habitat Units, so any negative impact is almost negligible.

The small loss of unused space will be balanced through the anticipated community use of the site. The provision of community garden infrastructure offers clear social and environmental benefits to the site and enhances the overall quality of land use while retaining a natural use of land.



Extract from the Rochdale Local Plan Policies Map, site outlined in red.

Overall, the proposals offer minimal on-site losses (0.01 Habitat Units) to both biodiversity and existing public space, and these losses will be mitigated through the enhancement of existing community facilities and future environmental land use. The accommodation of the QGardens Community Gardens group also enhances the available social and environmental infrastructure of the Borough – it is considered that the future social land use of the site offers significant improvement on the quality and provision of the current land use. The designation as 'Open Space' is enhanced through the facilitation of the community gardens use. The future land use is referenced as appropriate in the NPPF and offers significant social and community benefits.

It is therefore considered that the proposed application would be acceptable in planning terms, and in accordance with both the NPPF and the Local Plan.

Should you require any additional information to assist you in your consideration of this proposal then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ollie Porter". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Ollie" and "Porter" being capitalized and prominent.

Ollie Porter
For and on behalf of Triangle Architects Ltd.