



Paul Butler Associates

Planning, Development & Heritage Consultants

Rochdale Council

Land Off Heywood Old Road, Middleton

Planning Statement

05 August 2026

Paul Butler Associates, 31 Blackfriars Road, Salford, Manchester M3 7AQ
t. 0161 835 3530 | e. pba@paulbutlerassociates.co.uk | w. www.paulbutlerassociates.co.uk

Professional Planning, Development & Heritage Advisors since 1992.

Our professional staff are Members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) or the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA)

© Paul Butler Associates Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

Job Number: 25.2243

Project: Land Off Heywood Old Road, Middleton

Client: Rochdale Council

File Name: Planning Statement

Document Preparation/Checking Record:

	Name and Qualifications	Position	Date
Prepared by:	Lynsay Ewart BSc (Hons), MSc, MRTPI, IHBC	Principal Planner	05.03.2026
Checked by:	Julian Austin BSc (Hons) MPLAN MRTPI	Director	06.03.2026
Issued by:	Lynsay Ewart BSc (Hons), MSc, MRTPI, IHBC	Principal Planner	13.07.2026

Document Revision Record:

Issue No.	Date	Details of Revisions

Contents

1. Introduction
2. The Site and Surrounding Area
3. Planning History and Pre-application Consultation
4. The Proposed Scheme
5. National and Local Planning Policy Context
6. Planning Appraisal
7. Conclusion

Appendix 1: Appraisal of Alternative Sites

Appendix 2: Landscape Visual Assessment (LVA)

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates on behalf of the applicant, Rochdale Council. The Statement forms part of a planning application for the proposed construction of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) school for up to 64 pupils on land off Heywood Old Road in Middleton. The description of development is:

'Construction of an SEN school, with associated access, parking, landscaping, drainage, land regrading and associated works'.

- 1.2 In order to provide a clear understanding of the proposed scheme and its relationship with the surrounding area, this statement includes:

- A description of the site and surrounding area;
- A review of the planning history of the site;
- An overview of the proposed development;
- A review of relevant national and local planning policy guidance;
- An appraisal of the proposed development against its planning policy context and consideration of all relevant planning issues; and
- A conclusion

- 1.3 The Statement should be read in conjunction with the following information which comprise the planning application submission:

- Completed Planning Application Forms and Certificates.
- Drawings and Drawing Register prepared by Equilibrium Architects.
- Design and Access Statement prepared Equilibrium Architects.
- Planning Statement prepared by Paul Butler Associates.
- Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Paul Butler Associates.
- Landscape Details prepared by Trevor Bridge Architects.
- Preliminary Risk Assessment prepared by LK Consult.
- Phase 2 Geo-Environmental Investigation, Risk Assessment and Outline Remediation Strategy prepared by LK Consult.

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by E3P.
- Great Crested Newt eDNA Survey prepared by E3P.
- Biodiversity Metric Report and Metric prepared by E3P.
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Arboricultural Survey TCP/5446/Y/100, and Arboricultural Layout ARB/5446/Y/200 prepared by ACS Consultants.
- Transport Assessment prepared by SCP.
- Travel Plan prepared by SCP.
- Flood Risk Assessment prepared by LK Consult.
- Drainage Statement prepared by Harley Haddow.
- Crime Impact Statement prepared by Greater Manchester Police.
- Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Miller Goodall.
- Exterior Lighting Design And Impact Assessment prepared by Miller Goodall.
- Air Quality Assessment prepared by Miller Goodall.
- Energy and Sustainability Statement prepared by Miller Goodall.

2. The Site and Surrounding Area

The Application Site

- 2.1 The subject site comprises a roughly rectangular parcel of land and associated access route, off Old Heywood Road in Middleton. The site is situated approximately 2km to the northwest of Middleton Town Centre. The site is bounded to the north by Whittle Brook, beyond which is Silver Birch Stables and the Whittle Rise housing development of 23 dwellings which was nearing completion at the time of writing. To the east the site is bordered by a late 20th century housing estate, with dwellings on Wrigley Fold backing onto the southern portion of the site. Immediately to the west is the recently constructed Edgar Wood Academy and associated playing fields. Bordering the southern boundary of the site is Bowlee Park, which was a former RAF balloon barrage centre that was set up in October 1939 and active until 1944.



Figure 2.1: Aerial view of site. Approximate boundary in red.

- 2.2 The site comprises a field which was most recently used as grazing land. There is a small timber stable/shed situated to the north of the site. The land has varying topography, levels

are generally increasing when travelling from the northwest to the southeast of the site. The site is primarily un-managed grassland, with site boundaries to the north, south and part of the eastern boundary comprising mature hedgerows and vegetation. The boundary shared with Edgar Wood Academy is formed of a wire mesh fence. The site is not publicly accessible and there are no public rights of way crossing the site.

- 2.3 The site is located in a Flood Zone 1 and is not located within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). There are no listed buildings within the site, but there are two listed assets within relative proximity to the site. These include the Grade II listed Fountain Horse Trough To North Of White Hart Inn, which is located approximately 150m from the site, and the Grade II listed Birch-in-Hopwood War Memorial which is located approximately 200m to the north of the site to the rear of St Mary's Church. Birch Village Conservation Area is situated to the north of the site, taking in part of Heywood Old Road.
- 2.4 Figure 2.2 below is an extract from Rochdale's UDP Proposals Map. This identifies that the site is designated as Protected Open Land and a Green Space Corridor. The implications of these policy designations are discussed later in this statement.

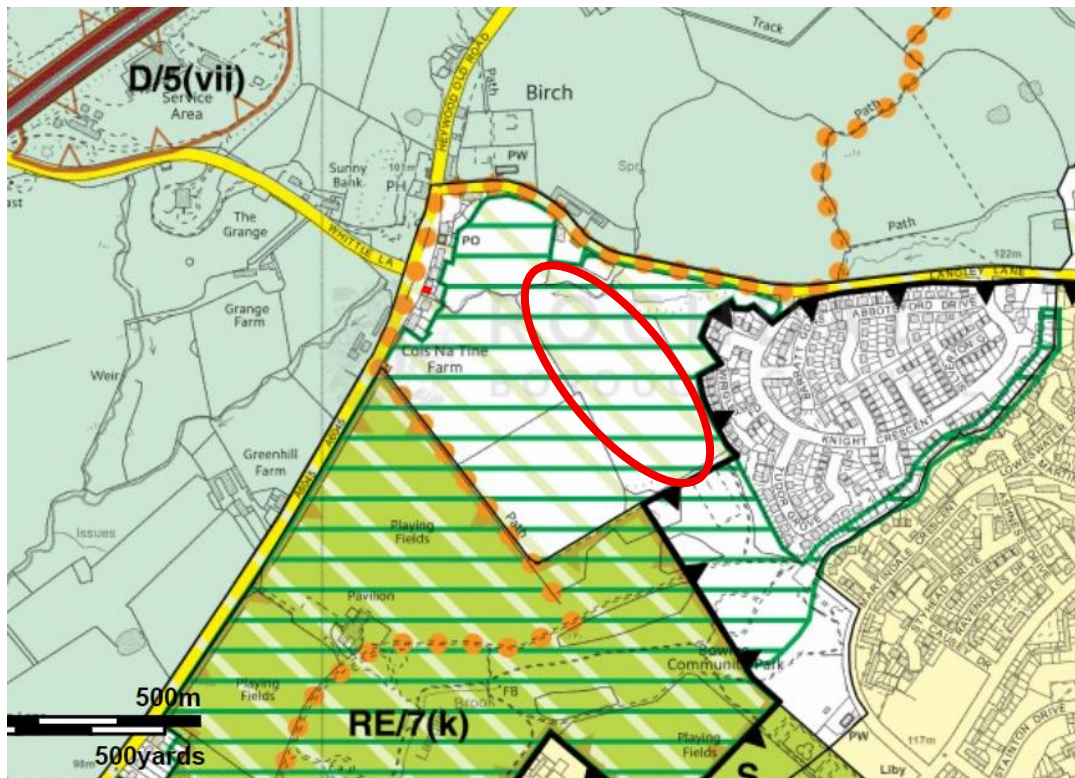


Figure 2.2: Extract of UDP Proposals Map. Approximate site location identified in red, map key below.

Map Key

- Light green hatching = Protected Open Land (relates to the site)
- Dark green hatching = Greenspace Corridors (relates to the site)
- Green wash = Green Belt (relates land to north of the site)
- Yellow line = Strategic Highway Network (relates to Heywood Old Road and Langley Lane)
- Yellow wash = Physical Regeneration Areas (relates to an area to the south east of the site)
- Black boundary with triangles = Defined Urban Area (relates to land to east of the site located to the south of Langley Road)

Surroundings

- 2.5 The character of the immediate locality reflects the site's location on the edge of Middleton, with a relatively dense housing estate to the east, and residential, educational uses and other local facilities adjacent to the site, whereas land to the north is more rural in nature.
- 2.6 The site is approximately 6.5Km to the south west of Rochdale Town Centre, and 2Km to the north of Middleton Town Centre. The M62 Motorway is approximately 1Km to the west. There

are bus stops in close proximity to the site on Langley Lane and Heywood Road with regular services between Middleton and Heywood.

3. Planning History and Pre-application Consultation

Planning History

- 3.1 Rochdale Council's online public access has been consulted to review the site's planning history. No applications have been identified. The written pre-application response also confirms there is no recent planning history for the site.

Pre-application Consultation

- 3.2 Paragraph 40 of the NPPF advises that 'Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality preapplication discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community'. Paragraph 41 goes on to advise that 'Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer'.
- 3.3 Prior to submission of the application a formal pre-application enquiry was submitted to Rochdale Council. In addition to this engagement with the local community and other relevant stakeholders has been undertaken. Please refer to the submitted Statement of Community Involvement prepared by Paul Butler associates which provides details of the pre-application engagement and how this has shaped the development process.

4. The Proposed Scheme

The Proposals

- 4.1 The planning application seeks consent for the construction of a new SEN school, the description of development is *'Construction of an SEN school, with associated access, parking, landscaping, drainage, land regrading and associated works'*.
- 4.2 The school will function as a satellite school to Redwood Secondary School, which is an existing SEN school based in Rochdale. The school will provide much-needed public infrastructure in a high-quality facility for children and young people who have complex autism Heywood and Middleton, and across the wider Rochdale Borough. The school will provide up to 64 places for students, with approximately 45 staff although this will fluctuate based on learner needs.
- 4.3 The school will be primarily single storey with a flat roof, with the exception of pitched double height element housing the activity studio, which adds articulation and visual interest to the design. The building will be located on the lower lying land such that it nestles into the topography of the site. It is of a bespoke design which responds to the characteristics of the site as well as meeting the requirements of the end user, Redwood Secondary School.
- 4.4 Externally the design of the building has a contemporary approach, but which is also sensitive to the rural characteristics of the site and surroundings. Materials will comprise buff brickslip, timber-effect cladding and metal standing seam cladding to the activity hall space. Cladded panels in muted colours will be used to identify the different 'home zones'. Windows are aluminium frame.
- 4.5 The building will be L-shaped overlooking a sensory courtyard. To the south of the building where levels begin to increase moving towards the boundary with Bowlee Park and housing on Wrigley Fold, the land will be free from buildings and provide a MUGA and nature trail. Landscaping will include planting to the sensory courtyard, wildflower meadows, native

hedge planting and tree planting. The building will be mechanically ventilated and an external area for plant is located to the north east of the building.

- 4.6 A total of 65 vehicle spaces will be provided on site including 6 disabled bays, 7 EV bays, and 12 mini-bus spaces, together with an area for drop offs. The site access will be taken via off the existing access road which serves Edgar Wood Academy, off Heywood Old Road. A portion of the proposed access road comprises land gifted from the Edgar Wood Academy grounds. The access road serving the school will be secured with two gated points.
- 4.7 For further details of the proposed scheme, please refer to the Design and Access Statement prepared by Equilibrium Architects.

Need for the School

Shortage of SEN provision in Rochdale

- 4.8 With regard to the need for new SEN provision, the minutes from the Council Cabinet meeting dated 29 August 2023 state the following;

As of 2021 DfE data, Rochdale had less than 1.5% of its SEN pupils in SEN hubs in mainstream schools. This compared to an England average of 6.5% and North-west region average of 5.3%. Both the total number of pupils in schools and the percentage of SEN pupils with Education and Health Care Plans, EHCPs, had risen. In 2022/23 Rochdale had 4.7% of its pupils with EHCPs, compared to a rate of 4.3% across England. As a consequence of rising numbers of pupils with EHCPs, mainstream schools in Rochdale had had rising numbers of children with complex SEN needs for some years. Rochdale also had rising numbers of pupils that were taking up SEN places in the expensive independent SEN sector. The SEN budget had a rising deficit and the rising number of pupils in the independent sector was a growing percentage of this deficit.

- 4.9 As of the time of writing this report, in Rochdale 5.7% of pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) compared to 5.3% nationally. The current number of children and

young adults with EHCPs is 3,783. Data from the DfE High Needs LA Benchmarking Tool from January 2025 shows Rochdale has considerably higher rates of EHCP pupils in its mainstream school settings (24.3 per 1000) compared to the statistical neighbours and England (19.6 and 18 per 1000 respectively). It has less children in special school places, (13.3 per 1000) than the statistical neighbours and Greater Manchester region (16 and 15.5 per 1000 respectively). For the last three years the council has been working with schools to create additional special school places within in mainstream offer through the creation of Resource Provisions, RPs, and SEN Units; termed SEN 'hubs'. The Council now has 6.5% of its school aged ECHP pupils in SEN hubs attached to mainstream schools. This is 158 additional SEN places created, with more in the current delivery pipeline.

- 4.10 Despite the council's SEN hub programme, in recent years the number of children being placed in the independent and out of borough special schools has risen sharply. The Educational Sufficiency Strategy Document which was approved at the Council's December 2025 cabinet states that since 2022/23 there has been a "a near doubling of school aged children being placed in the independent or non-maintained special school sector, with near doubling of total costs in that sector from £7.7m to £14m." The borough needs more, maintained and affordable, SEN school capacity at secondary level. The current dependency on the private sector to provide evermore SEN school places is, as nationally reported, unsustainable.

Increasing Population in Middleton

- 4.11 Middleton has seen a high level of house building through urban in-filling, as well as major developments on approved greenfield sites. In the last eight years there has been approximately 960 new homes, with some large developments still ongoing. Analysis of children from these developments show a pupil yield rate in pre-primary ages of 24% (0.24), primary age of 35.1% (0.351), and 12.3% (0.123) at secondary age. A new mainstream Secondary school, the Edgar Wood Academy, opened in 2022. In the pipeline are a further 1,000 homes in south Heywood a 1/4 mile north of this site, and a joint housing site being managed by Bury Council and Rochdale Council, which will see a further 1,500 homes a half mile south-east of this site.

Site Requirements

- 4.12 Redwood Secondary School – who have their main school site located at Hudsons Walk in Rochdale – will operate the proposed SEN school as a satellite school. The Hudsons Walk site is co-located with a mainstream secondary school, a community leisure centre and a community theatre. The complexity of the site makes the outdoor offer at the school particularly challenging. Redwood School therefore seek to use the new satellite site to improve its offer of classroom-outdoor connectivity to better provide spaces that aid self-regulation in its most vulnerable children, children with complex autism and severe learning needs.
- 4.13 Secondary school children accessing special school places from across the town of Rochdale, the Pennines area, Heywood and Middleton all travel to the main site, at Hudsons Walk, in the north-west of Rochdale. Having a satellite school site in Middleton will mean that children of Middleton will have access to a more local special school. This is becoming more important as the financial cost of SEN transport bill has risen.
- 4.14 The Council has undertaken a review of wider sites as part of a site selection exercise. The application site meets the requirements for the new school for three reasons:
- The site has access to nature, which is important for child mental health, self-regulation and learning.
 - The site is very close to two other Redwood bases which facilitates the management of staff. This cluster of Redwood sites in Middleton makes sure staffing, staff absence and illness can be covered by the flexibility of the three sites being a very short journey away. Spending public money for sector experts to be commuting long distances between sites is not a cost-effective solution.
 - The application site meets a third criteria in that it will be a secondary special school site offering Middleton children much shorter travel-to-school distances.
- 4.15 Schools need to be provided within reasonable travelling distances of housing and this part of Middleton has very large areas of Green Belt land, protected park land, and accessible

green spaces such as the golf course, golf range and plant nursery. During the consultation with local residents about the Edgar Wood Academy a decision was made to protect land within the designated Bowlee Park area due to the local value attributed to this space.

Site Selection

- 4.16 Children's Services works closely with the Strategic Planning department and is involved in early discussions on housing developments to look at school place sufficiency and potential new school sites. As such, officers are involved in discussions about sites that are available including brownfield, urban and regeneration sites. Examples of recently developed educational facilities in Rochdale include the Edgar Wood Academy (located adjacent to the application site), which opened in 2022. This school also has planning consent (planning reference: 25/01014/FUL) for an extension to provide an SEN unit. An Edgar Wood temporary school was opened on Hopwood Hall playing fields in Middleton for the 2021 intake. In September 2025, a new school – Heywood Academy - was opened which was built on former playing fields / unused open space, adjacent to Heywood Sports Village leisure centre.
- 4.17 As part of the schools development programme, multiple land searches have been undertaken over the last few years in this area, this included the DfE commissioning LocatEd to look at alternative sites for schools (details of the output of the LocatEd report were not shared with the council, but no alternative sites were identified).
- 4.18 With regard to site selection for the SEN school proposed under this application, a summary of the various sites that were considered by the Council and the reasons for discounting them is provided at Appendix 1 of this Statement. This includes various brownfield sites, and open spaces located within the Defined Urban Area as shown on the proposals map. In addition to the specific sites discounted in Appendix 1, throughout the process of looking for sites the Early Help and Schools service have continually reviewed commercial properties that could be purchased and renovated. Various sites of old pubs/restaurants have been looked at and considered, including one on Heywood Old Road. None of these were large enough to provide outdoor sports space for a school or school 'hub'. Council Property

Services have been asked several times to review warehousing and commercial sites across the borough that could lend themselves to conversion to a school, but no feasible sites have been identified.

4.19 The Council has also, over the last couple of years, sought to expand its SEN places through creation of smaller Hub sites. Redwood School now host children at different 10 sites. Consequently a search for small sites has also been ongoing, both boroughwide and including mostly commercially available 'urban' sites, both for rent or purchase viability. From September 2026 Redwood School plan to offer 40 school places at a town centre site in Heywood. The Heywood site is leased and will be a large ongoing expense for the council; it has no outdoor space so is only suitable for a subset of Redwood School children. The 64 children with complex autism who will be accommodated at this new satellite site need outside space as part of their ability to learn self-regulation.

4.20 The application site has therefore been selected following a thorough process and review of alternative sites in the area which have been discounted due to various ownership, access and environmental constraints. The proposed site is also considered appropriate given its proximity to an existing school facility, and surrounding residential development to the north and east, which effectively isolates this area of Protected Open Land (POL) from surrounding POL and Green Belt. This matter is considered further in section 5 of this statement.

5. National and Local Planning Policy Context

5.1 Planning policy guidance of relevance to the proposed scheme, and which provides the context for its assessment, is set out within the following:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF);
- The National Design Guide; and,
- The Development Plan for Rochdale.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2018 (and most recently updated in February 2025) and sets out the government's planning policies and how these are expected to be applied. It replaces the Framework published in March 2012, however a presumption in favour of sustainable development continues to be at the heart of the NPPF which ensures that development is pursued in a positive way.

5.3 Development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan should be approved without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless:

- i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

5.4 Paragraph 8 confirms that there are three dimensions to sustainable development; economic, social and environmental. To achieve sustainable development, economic,

social and environmental gains should be pursued in mutually supportive ways through the planning system.

Delivering Sustainable Development

- 5.5 The NPPF explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Planning policies and decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area. These sustainable objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of the policies in the framework. The NPPF is split into 17 chapters, the chapters of relevance to this development are discussed below.
- 5.6 Promoting healthy and safe communities (Chapter 8) – paragraph 100 advises that it is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. It states that local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted. Paragraph 104 deals with the protection of open space, sports and recreational land and buildings.
- 5.7 Promoting sustainable transport (Chapter 9) - to protect and exploit opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes, development should be located and designed to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and have access to high quality public transport facilities.
- 5.8 Paragraph 116 advises 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, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

5.9 Achieving well-designed places (Chapter 12) - this chapter sets out at paragraph 135 that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
- e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
- f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.

- 5.10 Protecting Green Belt Land (Chapter 13) – paragraph 142 explains 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.
- 5.11 Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change (Chapter 14) - this chapter emphasises the importance of securing reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to the impacts of climate change; and, in terms of flooding, development should be made safe without increasing flood risk elsewhere.
- 5.12 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment (Chapter 15) - the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services and minimising impacts of biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.
- 5.13 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment (Chapter 16) – advises that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations. Paragraph 207 states that ‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. 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’.
- 5.14 Paragraph 215 states that ‘Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.’
- 5.15 Facilitating the sustainable use of minerals (Chapter 17) – advises that planning policies should safeguard mineral resources by defining Mineral Safeguarding Areas and Mineral

Consultation Areas, and to set out policies to encourage the prior extraction of minerals, where practical and environmentally feasible, if it is necessary for non-mineral development to take place.

- 5.16 Decision making – guidance in paragraph 39 states that Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Local Planning Policy

The Development Plan for Rochdale

- 5.17 Section 38(6) of the Town and Country Planning Act 2004 states that applications for development should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In the case of Rochdale Council, the relevant adopted Development Plan documents include:

- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (March 2024)
- The Rochdale Core Strategy (October 2016)
- Saved policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006)

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document, 2024

- 5.18 The 'Places For Everyone Joint Development Plan Document For Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan' was adopted 21 March 2024 and forms part of the Development Plan for Rochdale. The following policies are of relevance to the proposed development:
- 5.19 Policy JP-S1: 'Sustainable Development' states that to help tackle climate change, development should 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.

- 5.20 Policy JP-S2: 'Carbon and Energy' states that the aim of delivering a carbon neutral Greater Manchester no later than 2038, with a dramatic reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, will be supported through a range of measures including: amongst other things, promoting the retrofitting of existing buildings with measures to improve energy efficiency and generate renewable and low carbon energy, heating and cooling.
- 5.21 Policy JP-S4: 'Flood Risk and the Water Environment' states that an integrated catchment-based approach will be taken to protect the quantity and quality of water bodies with reference to the North West River Basin Management Plan and managing flood risk, by: amongst other things locating and designing development so as to minimise the impacts of current and future flood risk, including retrofitting or relocating existing developments, infrastructure and places to increase resilience to flooding.
- 5.22 Policy JP-S5: 'Clean Air' states that a comprehensive range of measures will be taken to support improvements in air quality, focusing particularly on locations where people live, where children learn and play, where there are impacts on the green infrastructure network and where air quality targets are not being met, including: amongst other things, locating and designing development, and focusing transport investment, so as to reduce reliance on forms of transport that generate air pollution.
- 5.23 Policy JP-S6: 'Resource Efficiency' states that the achievement of a circular economy and a zero-waste economy will play a key role in meeting Greater Manchester's ambition of becoming a leading green city region by 2038. The following measures will help achieve this:
1. Development and implementation of the Zero Waste Strategy for Greater Manchester which promotes overall reduction in the level of waste produced and supports resource efficiency within the Plan area in order to gain the maximum value from the things we produce;
 2. Recognition of the role of existing infrastructure in managing our waste and protecting such facilities to ensure adequate waste management capacity is maintained; and

3. Using sustainable design and construction techniques to reduce carbon emissions, adapt and future proof to the impact of climate change, reduce and recycle waste and minimise water use.

5.24 Policy JP-G9: 'The Green Belt' states that the Green Belt is defined on the Policies Map and illustrated on Figure 8.6. The Green Belt serves the five purposes set out in national policy:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

5.25 While the site is not located in the Green Belt, policies that relate to the site restrict development to that which would be acceptable in the Green Belt. For context, the extract of the Places For Everyone Policies Map below identifies the extent of Green Belt in proximity of the site and identifying allocations JPA 1.1 'Heywood / Pilsworth (Northern Gateway)' and JPA 1.2 'Simister and Bowlee (Northern Gateway)'.

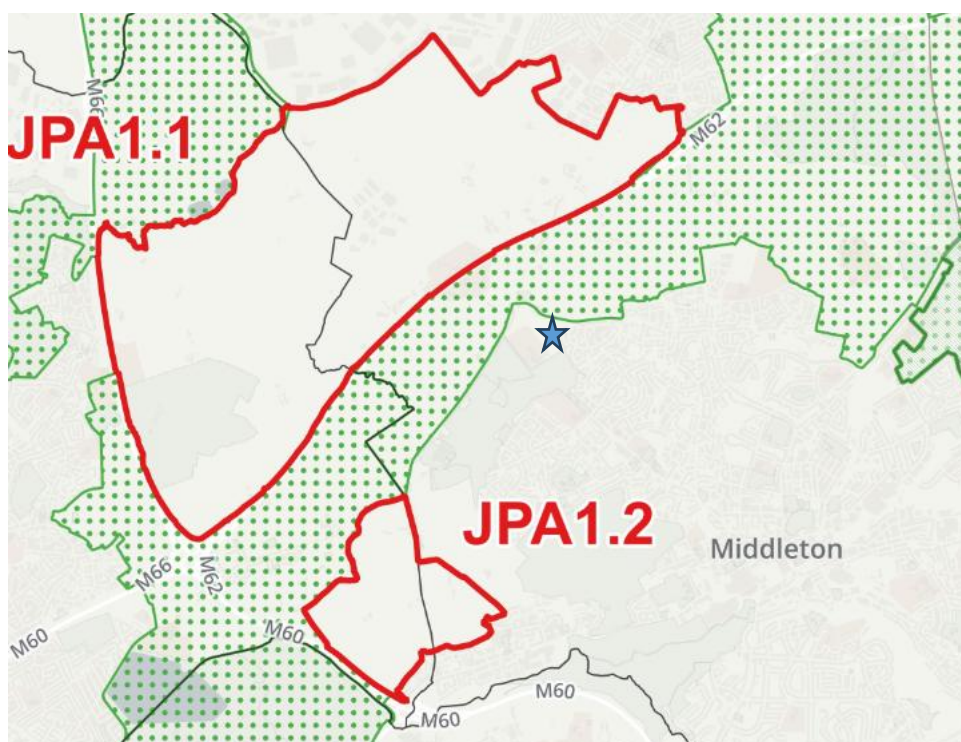


Figure 5.1: Extract of the Places for Everyone Policies Map. Site identified by the star.

- 5.26 Policy JP-G1: 'Landscape Character' the site is located within the Urban Fringe Farmland Landscape Character Area. The policy sets out that development should reflect and respond to the special qualities and sensitivities of the key landscape characteristics of its location.
- 5.27 Policy JP-G2: 'Green Infrastructure Network' states that development which involves the removal of land from the Green Belt will be required to offset the impact of removing land from the Green Belt through identifying and delivering compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt in the vicinity of the site
- 5.28 Policy JP-G7: 'Trees and Woodland' the policy sets out that where development would result in the loss of existing trees, requiring replacement on the basis of two new trees for each tree lost, or other measures that would also result in a net enhancement in the character and quality of the treescape and biodiversity value in the local area, with a preference for on-site provision.

- 5.29 Policy JP-G8: 'A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity' states that through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought.
- 5.30 Policy JP-P1: 'Sustainable Places' this policy sets 17 key attributes that all development should be consistent with. In respect of social inclusivity, development should do this by:
- A. Responding to the needs of all parts of society
 - B. Enabling everyone to participate equally and independently;
 - C. Providing opportunities for social contact and support; and
 - D. Promoting a sense of community;
- 5.31 Policy JP-P5: 'Education, Skills and Knowledge' this policy seeks to provide enhancements in education by enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities for all ages and ensuring the delivery of sufficient school places to respond to the demands from new housing.
- 5.32 Policy JP-P7: 'Sport and Recreation' advises that a network of high quality and accessible sports and recreation facilities will be protected and enhanced.
- 5.33 Policy JP-P2: 'Heritage' states that development proposals affecting designated and non-designated heritage assets and/or their settings will be considered having regard to national planning policy.
- 5.34 Policy JP-C8: 'Transport Requirements of New Development' states that new development will be required 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.

The Rochdale Core Strategy (October 2016)

- 5.35 Following adoption of Places for Everyone in March 2024, a number of the policies of the Core Strategy have been superseded. The following policies remain in place and are of relevance to the proposed development being considered:
- 5.36 Policy C6 'Improving health and well-being' the policy supports the creation of an economic, social and physical environment which promotes and supports healthy lifestyles and outlines a number of policy objectives to achieve this.
- 5.37 Policy C7 'Delivering Education Facilities' the policy aims to improve education, skills and training in the borough and raise educational achievement. This will be done through:
- a. Providing educational facilities in appropriate and accessible locations;
 - b. Ensuring school facilities are co located with other educational related facilities or services such as Children's Centres and businesses and enterprise in order to maximise learning;
 - c. Improving accessibility to educational facilities by foot, cycling and public transport;
 - d. Seeking high quality design of educational buildings with facilities appropriate to support learning;
 - e. Supporting wider skills training and education of residents through providing more libraries, and supporting and working with employment agencies and local businesses;
 - f. Promote the provision of existing and new facilities, open space and leisure uses that create interest and activity, and opportunities taken for educational and learning use.
 - g. Ensuring educational facilities are sustainable and provide good access to communities, the natural environment, heritage, culture and lifelong learning; and
 - h. Seek developer contributions for the provision of educational facilities (including new school places) and employment skills and training.
- 5.38 Policy T2 'Improving Accessibility' advises that development will be appropriately located to minimise the need to travel by car and the number and length of car trips made to access local amenities.

5.39 Policy P1 'Improving image' requires design which is of a high standard in all developments, which is particularly important in various locations. The policy also promotes the development and re-use of under-used land and buildings, maximising the potential for heritage assets to provide a sense of place and image.

5.40 Policy 'P2 Protecting and Enhancing Character, Landscape and Heritage' states that the Council will:

1. Protect and enhance the borough's character, the distinctiveness of its town centres, housing areas and countryside, and the qualities of its landscapes, utilising the considerable potential of these assets in development and regeneration schemes. They will do this by:

- a. Requiring new development to integrate successfully with the key natural features of the borough, e.g. river valleys and the Pennine landscape;
- b. Requiring new development to take opportunities to protect and open up important views of hills and valleys which are part of the borough's unique character;
- c. Restoring the River Roch and other water bodies to their place as key and attractive features of the borough, including opening up waterways where they have been covered, and enhancing their setting, heritage assets and biodiversity potential;
- d. Protecting, enhancing and utilising outstanding cultural landscapes, such as the Cheesden Valley area and around Littleborough and Hollingworth Lake; and
- e. Conserving and enhancing townscape character.

2. The Council will seek to protect the borough's heritage by:

- a. Conserving, enhancing and promoting key heritage assets, both statutory and non-statutory, including consideration of their wider settings. Key heritage assets of the borough include:
 - i. Four outstanding conservation areas: Central Rochdale, Middleton and Littleborough town centres and Rock Nook / Summit;

- ii. Other designated assets such as listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks and scheduled ancient monuments;
 - iii. The heritage of the Co-operative movement, the Rochdale Pioneers and the Labour movement;
 - iv. The Edgar Wood and J. H. Sellers cultural heritage;
 - v. The heritage of the seventeenth and eighteenth century vernacular tradition; and
 - vi. The engineering heritage, including mills, canals and railways.
- b. Conserving, enhancing and utilising other non-statutory heritage assets of local interest, be they buildings, parks, gardens or archaeological sites, including promoting their sensitive restoration;
- c. Using heritage assets positively and intelligently to strengthen identity and image and support the visitor economy, particularly in development and regeneration schemes; and
- d. Prioritising the conservation of heritage assets at risk from decay, giving special attention to designated heritage assets in this regard.

5.41 Policy P3 'Improving Design of New Development' states that the Council will require all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design. The following design principles should be adhered to wherever relevant:

- Enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general;
- Ensure that buildings contribute positively to the townscape, and are well proportioned;
- Incorporating design measures that design out crime and ensure developments and spaces are safe to use and access (including lighting as appropriate);
- Provide an appropriate mix of uses and consider the needs of all sections of society;
- Ensure a development is easy to move through and get around, especially for pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, disabled people and emergency service vehicles;

- Provide a hierarchy of routes, streets and spaces, relating positively to visual connections between the development and its surroundings;
- Ensure that the intended functions of buildings and spaces are easily understood, and their entrances appropriately located and visible;
- Ensure buildings can be easily adapted to meet future/alternative needs of occupants;
- Minimise impact upon the environment, and help adapt to the impacts of climate change, including by re-using existing buildings and materials (maximising the benefits of existing embodied energy) and utilising sustainable drainage (Policies G1 and G2);
- Design buildings and spaces so that quality and appearance can be maintained over time; and
- Reduce the monotony and visual impact of car parking areas by using substantial and well integrated landscaping.

5.42 Policy G5 'Managing protected open land' states:

'1. Protecting Open Land Outside the Urban Area and not in the Green Belt. We will continue to protect from development open land outside the urban area and not in the Green Belt in the following broad areas:

- Land west and south of Middleton;
- Land north of Langley/Hollins, Middleton;
- Land adjoining the Rochdale Canal and Whit Brook, Middleton;
- Roch river valley, Heywood to Rochdale Town Centre;
- Roch river valley, Rochdale to Littleborough; and
- Land straddling the A627M corridor between Castleton and Kirkholt.

2. Development in Protected Open Land

- a. Development on open land outside the urban area and not in the Green Belt will be resisted unless: it is limited development that would be acceptable were it in the Green Belt; or
- b. it is small scale development which is consistent with other detailed policies and site allocations in the Local Development Plan; or
- c. it satisfies 3 below.

3. Release of Protected Open Land

Protected Open Land will not be released for development unless all the following apply:

- a. there is evidence that the development is needed and that 'urban' brownfield and greenfield sites are not available to meet those needs;
- b. the location of the site is sustainable and is in accordance with the overall Spatial Strategy;
- c. the development does not undermine the delivery of other currently allocated sites or key regeneration priorities and can help to deliver wider regeneration;
- d. development could be accommodated without an unacceptable impact on the area's landscape, biodiversity or wider green infrastructure value;
- e. there is evidence that the land is physically suitable for the scale and type of development proposed; and
- f. the development and supporting infrastructure is capable of being delivered.

Where the release of protected open land can be justified, the Council will seek to identify it as an allocation in a future DPD. Any proposals that come forward would need to:

- g. involve a comprehensive scheme for the delivery of the development, transport and other necessary infrastructure to serve the development; and
- h. identify measures to address environmental impacts and where possible provide local benefits.'

5.43 Policy G6 'Enhancing green infrastructure' this policy advises that the Council will protect and improve green spaces and water bodies and ensure that their value to sustainable development and regeneration is maximised.

5.44 Policy G7 'Increasing the Value of Biodiversity and Geodiversity' advises that the Council will ensure that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are given full and appropriate recognition and protection. Opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity, creating new sites and features of interest and improving opportunities for public enjoyment will be supported. No development should result in a net loss of biodiversity

or geodiversity interest in the borough and overall development in the borough should result in a net gain.

- 5.45 Policy G8 'Managing Water Resources and Flood Risk' advises that the Council will ensure that new development (including flood risk mitigation measures) does not lead to any form of increased 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, is itself well protected from flood risk and ensures prudent use of water resources.
- 5.46 Policy G9 'Reducing the Impact of Pollution, Contamination and Land Instability' advises that the Council will reduce all forms of pollution, contamination and land instability in the borough.
- 5.47 Policy G10 'Managing mineral resources' this policy advises that the Council will ensure the sustainable management of mineral resources and make an appropriate contribution towards helping Greater Manchester to meet its contribution to the regional apportionment for land-won aggregate and maintaining an appropriate land bank.
- 5.48 Policy DM1 'General Development Requirements' states that all development proposals, including changes of use of land and buildings, extensions and alterations, will be expected to demonstrate that they:
- a. Are of high quality design and take the opportunity to enhance the quality of the area;
 - b. Are compatible with surrounding land uses, both in terms of its impact upon those uses and the impact of the surrounding land uses upon the amenities of future residents / users;
 - c. Do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy;
 - d. Mitigate against any impacts due to noise, air, dust, light and odour pollution, traffic generation or inadequate access, where such mitigation is identified as being necessary;

- e. Provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking, manoeuvring, and servicing arrangements taking into account of the proposed use and location;
- f. Do not have an adverse impact on health, through its impact or the effect of existing problems e.g. land contamination, or poor air quality;
- g. Provide, or demonstrate the availability of, the service and community infrastructure necessary to meet local needs e.g. local shops, community, leisure and sport facilities and provision of open space;
- h. Minimise opportunities for crime against people or property;
- i. Take account of ground conditions including unstable or contaminated land - where a potential risk exists, a survey should be carried out and any necessary remedial measures identified and carried out;
- j. Incorporate, where appropriate, high quality landscape schemes;
- k. Have assessed whether the development may be affected by ground instability;
- l. Have considered the availability of water and wastewater infrastructure, and any need for additional capacity; and
- m. Do not lead to impacts detrimental to the conservation interests of European Protected Sites.

- 5.49 Policy SD1 'Delivering sustainable development' this policy advises that in considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

Saved Policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

- 5.50 The Saved UDP includes a Development Plan Map and a Written Statement. These are reviewed below in relation to the development proposal below:

5.51 Policy D/10 'Protection of Open Land' states that:

'Within the areas of Protected Open Land defined on the Proposals Map, development proposals will be permitted that fall within one or more of the following categories:

- a) development which would be acceptable were it in the Green Belt; or
- b) limited infilling within an established pocket of housing or industry where this is in scale with the area and will not adversely affect its character or surroundings; or
- c) a limited extension to an existing building which:
 - i. forms part of an existing source of employment; or
 - ii. is necessary for the establishment of a new enterprise or business which satisfies other policies of the Plan; and
 - iii. is sited within the existing curtilage of the business concerned, and will not adversely affect the character of the surrounding land and its openness.

Where new buildings are permitted, they should be sited to form a group with existing buildings. Where this is not possible, buildings, car parking areas and other new structures, should be sited where they will be well screened and unobtrusive in the landscape. All buildings and extensions should be of a high standard of design, using materials that are compatible with the landscape, and should not detract from the visual amenity and environment of adjacent Green Belt.

The written justification to this policy states:

'Not all peripheral open land is designated Green Belt. However, it is a general principle of national policy that development outside the main urban areas should be restricted. This supports the Council's efforts to achieve urban regeneration. Areas of open land between the Green Belt and the urban area also perform a valuable role in:

- providing a sense of relief from large scale urban development;
- contributing to the character or identity of a specific part of the urban edge;
- protecting the visual amenity of adjacent Green Belt; and
- generally projecting an attractive image of the Borough (which is important to help attract new investment and revitalise the local economy).

The policy recognises that some forms of development are acceptable because they are small-scale, or help to support new or existing businesses, including farm diversification. However, particular regard will be had to the impact of the development on the character and qualities of the open land and the potential for enhancement in line with Policy RE/2 "Countryside Around Towns". (PBA Note: Policy RE/2 is no longer saved).

5.52 Policy G/8 (A) 'Greenspace Corridors' this policy states that Greenspace Corridors shown on the Proposals Map will be protected. Development and other measures which will enhance their recreational, ecological or landscape and amenity value will be permitted. In those parts of the corridors which are outside the Defined Urban Area, the provisions of Policy D/10 will also apply. Within all parts of Greenspace Corridors, the Council will not permit development proposals which would:

- a) Lead to an unacceptable narrowing or a division of the corridor into sections, thereby,
 - i. restricting the movement of wildlife along it, or
 - ii. restricting the movement of people along established or proposed recreational routes or rights of way;
- b) Result in the loss or severance of links between areas of recreational open space;
- c) Result in the loss of existing valued recreational facilities or prejudice proposed new facilities; or
- d) Prevent public access into the corridor at strategic locations; or which would result in unacceptable harm to:-
- e) The better landscape qualities and character of the corridor;
- f) The amenity value of the corridor where it provides welcome visual relief from urban development, including attractive views in and out of the corridor;
- g) Features of nature conservation interest, including designated and non designated sites; or
- h) Viable agricultural operations, including good quality grazing land and allotments.

5.53 G/8 (B) Any new development permitted within or adjacent to the corridors will be of a design, and use materials appropriate to, the character and setting of the corridor. Boundary treatments and landscaping should help to retain or re-establish a 'countryside' character in the corridors and contribute to nature conservation interest through design and use of appropriate species.

- 5.54 G/8 (C) Proposals for open or built recreational facilities should be of a scale and nature appropriate to the location and should not lead to an unacceptable level of recreational activity having regard to visual amenity, nature conservation interests and the need to retain an informal or unspoilt character. Development or activities should not conflict with existing uses or activities (e.g., grazing) and should not create disturbance for local residents.
- 5.55 G/8 (D) Development proposals will be permitted that protect and enhance Greenspace Corridors and realise their potential for recreation and nature conservation.

6. Planning Appraisal

6.1 Having regard to the planning policy guidance set out in section 5, the key planning issues to be considered in the determination of the application include:

- Principle of Development: Protected Open Land
- Landscape Impacts: Green Space Corridor
- Impact on Playing Fields
- Design
- Heritage Assessment
- Amenity
- Access and Highways
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Contamination
- Mineral Resources
- Sustainable Development

Principle of Development: Protected Open Land

6.2 The new SEN facility is proposed on land allocated as 'Protected Open Land' (POL). Core Strategy Policy G5 and Saved UDP Policy D/10 are the key policies which relate to this designation. Part 3 of Core Strategy policy G5 provides a policy test for the release of POL for development. An appraisal of the proposed development against each criterion is provided below:

6.3 *Protected Open Land will not be released for development unless all the following apply:*

- a. *there is evidence that the development is needed and that 'urban' brownfield and greenfield sites are not available to meet those needs;*

Response: The need for an SEN facility in Middleton has been set out in chapter 4 of this Statement, along with details of other sites which have been considered but were not deemed suitable due to various constraints. A summary of the sites considered

is provided at Appendix 1 of this statement. Paragraph 100 of the NPFF states that *"It is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should: a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years, schools and post-16 facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and b) work with early years, school and post-16 promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted."* The Local Authority has a statutory duty to offer school places to every child living in the borough, however currently pupils are having to travel outside of the borough or to independent schools.

- b. *the location of the site is sustainable and is in accordance with the overall Spatial Strategy;*

Response:

The site is located within the identified Manchester Fringe, Core Strategy policy SP2 identifies this as the major focus of development in the borough. Core Strategy policy SP3/M 'The Strategy for Middleton' seeks to regenerate Langley by: Continuing the development of more high-quality homes to widen tenure choice within the estate; Improving the local centre and other community facilities; and, creating a high quality green space network with linkages to open space beyond the urban area. The provision of a much needed SEN school will assist in providing improved community facilities, and support the provision of new homes in the area.

The submitted Transport Assessment confirms that the site is sustainable and benefits from a good walking and cycling network alongside good public transport links. Heywood Old Road is well suited to staff making trips to the school on foot or bicycle from local residential areas. For staff living further afield, there is a key bus service within walking distance of the site. The location is therefore considered to be accessible via sustainable modes with an attractive environment for active travel.

- c. the development does not undermine the delivery of other currently allocated sites or key regeneration priorities and can help to deliver wider regeneration;*

Response: The proposed SEN school facility is needed to address a shortfall in local authority SEN provision within the borough. Such a facility would not undermine the delivery of other allocated sites, indeed it will assist with the regeneration objectives outlined in policy SP3/M through the provision of infrastructure to support the local community and new housing which is planned or being delivered.

- d. development could be accommodated without an unacceptable impact on the area's landscape, biodiversity or wider green infrastructure value; e. there is evidence that the land is physically suitable for the scale and type of development proposed; and*

Response: The submitted Preliminary Ecological Assessment does not suggest the development would have an unacceptable impact on biodiversity or ecology, mitigation has been recommended where required including a recommendation for further surveys during the survey season, but does not identify this as a limitation to development. Furthermore, a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Metric Report has been submitted and confirms that relevant BNG legislation can be complied with. A large proportion of the site will remain open, with extensive tree planting provided which will enhance the biodiversity value and enable the corridor function of the site to continue.

- e. there is evidence that the land is physically suitable for the scale and type of development proposed; and*

Response: The suitability of the site for the development proposed is illustrated on the submitted drawings. The proposed building, landscaping, external play, sport and learning areas, together with the parking, drop-off and access can be comfortably accommodated within the site.

- f. the development and supporting infrastructure is capable of being delivered.*

Response: The proposed scheme is deliverable on the site for the following reasons:

- It is Available – The applicant owns the majority of the site, and a land transfer for part of the access has been agreed, therefore RBC are in a position to develop it once permission is secured.
- It is Suitable – The suitability of the site for education development is confirmed throughout this report, by reason of its location adjacent to existing residential development and educational facilities, and compatibility with neighbouring uses.
- It is Achievable – There are no policy restrictions or development constraints that would impact on the scheme's deliverability.
- It is Viable – The scheme is viable and deliverable in the short-term.

Where the release of protected open land can be justified, the Council will seek to identify it as an allocation in a future DPD. Any proposals that come forward would need to:

- g. involve a comprehensive scheme for the delivery of the development, transport and other necessary infrastructure to serve the development; and*

Response: Given the timescales associated with delivering a new school, it would not be feasible to allocate the site's release in a future DPD. The proposals are for a standalone development with limited infrastructure required beyond the works proposed within the red line boundary. The scheme will utilise the existing vehicle access from Heywood Old Road, albeit a Highway Improvement scheme is planned in Brich aimed at HGV mitigation, which is separate of this proposal.

- h. identify measures to address environmental impacts and where possible provide local benefits.*

Response: The technical documents accompanying this application confirm there are no unacceptable impacts, and propose mitigation where required. The proposals will result in substantial benefits including social benefits from providing a much needed educational facility catering to young people with autism. There will be economic benefits through reducing the local authority costs in funding out-of-borough SEN places and associated travel costs, as well as job creation during the construction and operational phase.

- 6.4 It is considered that part 3 of Core Strategy policy G5 is met.
- 6.5 Part b of UDP Policy D/10 states that development proposals within areas of POL will be permitted where this constitutes *'limited infilling within an established pocket of housing or industry where this is in scale with the area and will not adversely affect its character or surroundings'*. The site is located on the fringes of the defined urban area of Middleton. The site is bounded to the east by a relatively dense and established housing estate, to the north west by the recently constructed Whittle Rise housing development, and to the east by Edgar Wood Academy. The proposed building is generally single storey and relatively modest in scale when compared to the size of the plot, therefore it arguably constitutes limited infilling within an established pocket of development, in accordance with Policy D/10.
- 6.6 Policy D/10 states that where new buildings are permitted, they should be sited to form a group with existing buildings. Where this is not possible, buildings, car parking areas and other new structures, should be sited where they will be well screened and unobtrusive in the landscape. All buildings and extensions should be of a high standard of design, using materials that are compatible with the landscape, and should not detract from the visual amenity and environment of adjacent Green Belt.
- 6.7 The built form is proposed in the lower area of the site, thereby reducing any visual prominence it would have if sited further south in the site where levels increase. The single storey nature of the scheme, together with the proposed tree planting and extensive areas of the site which are to remain free of built development will assist in minimising landscape impacts. Furthermore, the use of materials such as timber-effect cladding to the elevations are in keeping with the 'rural' character of the site and Green Belt backdrop to the north, and thereby regarded to be compatible with the surrounding context. The use of coloured 'home zone' panels has been proposed to enhance the experience for pupils, and to provide a visual aid for wayfinding. The limited use of these panels which will be in muted tones, with a recessive position from public vantage points will mean that there is limited visibility of the coloured cladding in longer range views of the landscape.
- 6.8 It is considered that the proposals are in line with the objectives of Saved Policy D/10.

6.9 Furthermore the proposals are associated with the following significant planning benefits:

- Provision of much-needed public infrastructure in a high-quality facility for children and young people in Heywood and Middleton, and across the wider Rochdale Borough, who have autism.
- Provision of much needed SEN school provision within Rochdale which will address existing capacity shortfall issues, thereby reducing Council costs associated with funding alternative provision.
- Co-location of the new satellite school site next to an existing school will give benefits to existing school children in the area and will boost integration for children with SEN needs. The site layout has been designed to minimise impacts upon neighbouring residents where possible.
- Provision of soft landscaping and tree planting which will have biodiversity benefits.
- Provision of a development with adequate vehicle parking and a dedicated off-road drop off lay by.
- The new school will reduce traffic across the wider area by providing specialist school places within the Heywood / Middleton area. This will reduce travel to school distances for the most vulnerable children and help address the issue of children of having to travel out of borough for SEN school provision.
- Securing direct investment into the local community through the provision of jobs during the construction and operational phase of the development.

6.10 Notwithstanding that policy tests for the development of POL set out in Core Strategy policy G5 and UDP policy D/10 are regarded to be met, these policies also provide an additional exception whereby development is regarded to be acceptable in POL were it acceptable in the Green Belt. This engages Green Belt policy which is set out in chapter 13 of the NPPF. An appraisal of this is set out below.

Green Belt Assessment – Very Special Circumstances

- 6.11 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. ‘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’*.
- 6.12 Should the decision maker consider that the POL policies assessed above are not wholly satisfied, then a clear set of ‘very special circumstances’ exist which outweigh any potential harm to the landscape (and any other potential harm identified). The very special circumstances surrounding the scheme are outlined below.

There is an identified need for SEN provision in Middleton

- 6.13 The proposed development is for a much-needed SEN facility for young people aged 11-19 across the borough of Rochdale who will have a Health and Education Plan (EHCP) naming the site, as is the legal requirement. The facility is required to relieve the significant pressure on existing educational facilities and services within the Borough and also to reduce reliance on out of borough placements which has an associated cost.
- 6.14 Currently, the RBC are placing children with EHCPs at very considerable distances outside of the borough boundaries because of a lack of specialist places. Redwood Secondary School - who will be operators of the proposed school – have two existing SEN units, one in northern Rochdale and one within Edgar Wood Academy. Therefore, having three smaller provisions within easy travel distances within Middleton, allows the school to manage staff absence and staffing changes within the current challenging revenue funding allocations. Having staff travelling in their cars long distances between provisions is not a cost-effective use of tax payers money, and is not a sustainable operation strategy. The need for the development has been set out at section 4 of this Statement.

The proposals can only be delivered at the site

- 6.15 The proposed facility has various requirements which has implications for site suitability. The proposed school will cater to vulnerable children with complex autism who require outside space as part of their ability to learn self-regulation, therefore a site which can offer external provision is a prerequisite. There are also site requirements in terms of location and proximity to other SEN satellite schools to facilitate staffing and operation; and, a requirement to be located in proximity to the communities it is intended to serve.
- 6.16 Rochdale Council have undertaken a thorough review of sites as part of a site selection process. Appendix 1 of this Statement provides an appraisal of numerous sites within Heywood and Middleton, including both greenfield and brownfield sites, which are located within defined settlement boundaries. It has been demonstrated that there are no other reasonably available sites within the required catchment area that are suitable or feasible for the proposed use.

Spatial relationship with existing development

- 6.17 While the site is not located within the Green Belt, the 'harm' associated with developing this area of POL is deemed to be limited given its spatial relationship with neighbouring development. A Landscape and Visual Analysis (LVA) is provided at Appendix 2 of this Statement and examines the visibility of the site from a range of viewpoints. When viewed from Heywood Old Road, the building will be read in the context of the existing Edgar Wood school building which is three storeys in height, as well as the housing on Wrigley Fold which is at an elevated position. Views of the development from Langley Lane and Bowlee Park are screened by vegetation, while from public locations on Wrigley Fold the development will be screened by the existing two storey housing. Taking this into account with the pressing need to deliver SEN school provision, it is considered that very special circumstances are demonstrated.

Green Belt Assessment – Grey Belt

- 6.18 Paragraph 155 of the new NPPF introduces an additional classification of development in the Green Belt (known as ‘grey belt’) under which development is not considered inappropriate. Paragraph 155 of the NPPF states:

‘The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where all the following apply:

- a. 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;*
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.’*

- 6.19 There are a number of considerations inherent in paragraph 155a. This new definition of ‘grey belt’ land is included in the glossary of the NPPF as follows:

Grey belt: *‘For the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, ‘grey belt’ is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143. ‘Grey belt’ excludes land where the application of the policies relating to the areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.’*

- 6.20 Therefore, under paragraph 155(a) the first test for the LPA in considering whether a site can be classified as ‘grey belt’ would be to assess the development site against the green belt purposes (a), (b) and (d) in paragraph 143 and the strength of contribution that the development site makes to these purposes. Table 6.1 below provides an assessment of the contribution that the site makes to these purposes – it is important to note that the site is not located within the Green Belt, but this assessment has been undertaken in response to local policies G5 and D/10 which allow development were it acceptable in the Green Belt.

6.21 Figure 6.1 below is an excerpt from MappingGM which identifies Green Belt land, allocated sites, accessible greenspace and conservation areas. The site is identified by the star symbol. Guidance contained within the Planning Practice Guidance has been consulted in this assessment.

Green Belt Purpose	Strength of Contribution the site makes to this Purpose
143 a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;	<u>Moderate</u> : the site is adjacent to existing development to the south east, west and north. It is also subject to urbanising influence from proximity to Langley Lane and Heywood Old Road. The site is therefore partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development. There is a significant corridor of Green Belt to the north of the site between the development and the allocated warehousing and industrial land to the north (yellow wash on figure 6.1).
143 b) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.	<u>Weak</u> : This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages, therefore Birch Village is not assessed as a separate settlement. The site is enclosed by existing development in Middleton on a number of sides, therefore if regarded to form part of a gap between Heywood to the north, this would be only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation.
143 d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	<u>Weak</u> : This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. The site is adjacent to Birch Village Conservation Area, however the purpose is not applicable to villages. Assessment of the impact of the proposals on the setting of Conservation Area is dealt with later in this Statement.

Table 6.1: grey belt assessment

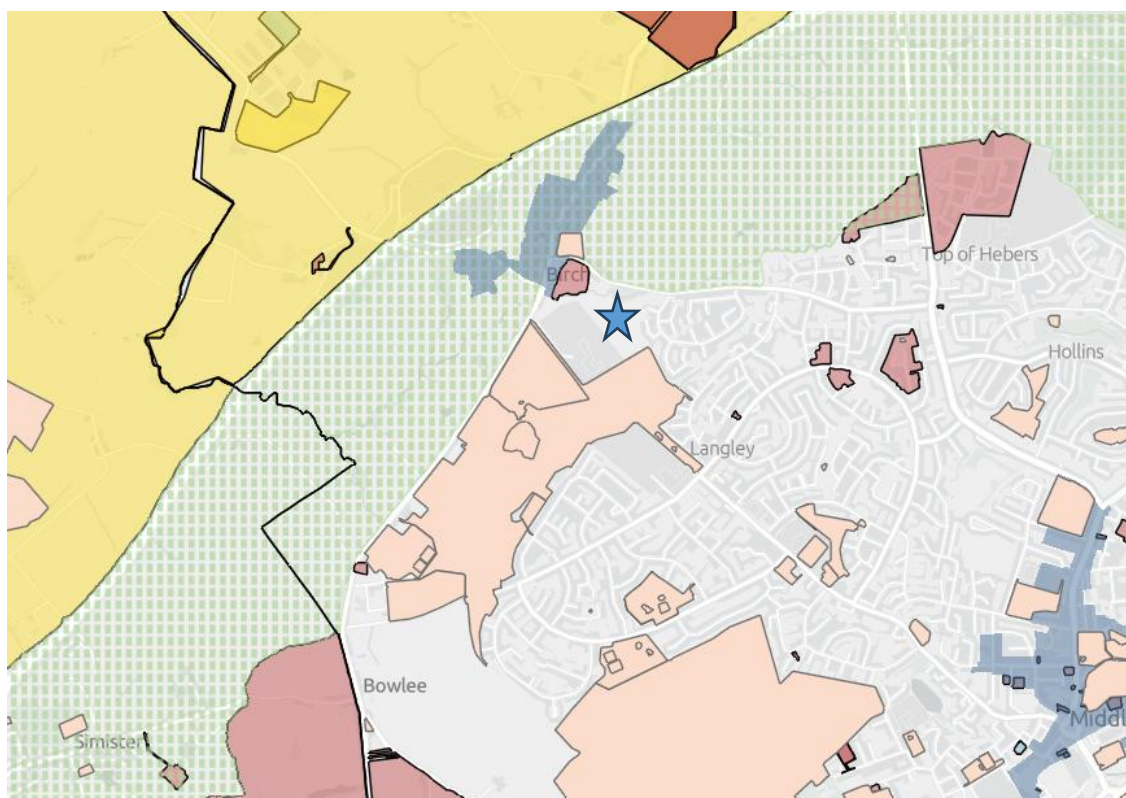


Figure 6.1: Mapping GM interactive map excerpt. Key: star symbol = application site; peach = green space; green = Green Belt; pink = housing allocation = pink; yellow = industrial allocation; blue = Conservation area.

- 6.22 The second part in establishing whether land is grey belt (against the glossary definition) is an assessment of the application of policies relating to the areas or assets in NPPF footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) which would not provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development. The site is located adjacent to Conservation Area which is a designated heritage asset. An appraisal of impact is provided later in this Statement and concludes that there would be no conflict with footnote 7.
- 6.23 Based on the above, it is regarded that the site does not strongly contribute to Green Belt purposes (a), (b) and (d) in paragraph 143, nor would the application of policies in footnote 7 provide a strong reason for refusing development.
- 6.24 At this point it is necessary to return to the requirements of paragraph 155, the second part of which also requires consideration. *155a: 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.

- 6.25 The above analysis establishes the potential for the site to be regarded as grey belt land, were it in the Greenbelt. Given the relatively small size of land take, the presence of development providing containment of the site on a number of boundaries and adjacent highways providing a physical barrier from the designated Green Belt, it is not considered that the proposed development would fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining green belt across the plan area. We therefore consider that the development of the site can be justified in Green Belt terms when taken against criterion a) of paragraph 155.
- 6.26 Criterion b) of paragraph 155 states: *There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.* The need for the development has been demonstrated in section 4 of this planning statement. There is a shortfall of SEN school places within the borough, and currently RBC have to rely on out-of-borough school places and funding expensive independent school provision. Local authorities have a duty to provide sufficient school provision and currently there is an unmet need.
- 6.27 Criterion c) of paragraph 155 states: *The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework.* The development will be co-located adjacent to an existing school, and established residential development. The site is adjacent to the urban settlement of Middleton. The site benefits from good accessibility via cycle infrastructure, and is also served by bus routes with bus stops on Langley Lane and close to the site on Heywood Old Road. It should be noted that while staff will be encouraged to travel to site using sustainable transport modes, this is likely not appropriate for future students of the facility. Students will travel to school via mini-buses, which will due to the shared nature of transport will result in fewer trips and drop-off / collections than a mainstream school. Furthermore, children are currently having to travel to facilities located outside of the borough and therefore there will be an overall reduction in travel distances when compared with the existing situation which is ultimately more sustainable and in consistent with the underlying objective of paragraph 110. The submitted Transport Statement confirms that the proposed access is safe and suitable for all users, and

that there will be no unacceptable impact on the highway network in terms of congestion or capacity, in accordance with paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

6.28 Criterion d) of paragraph 155 relates to the 'Golden Rules' which is only applicable to housing development and therefore does not need to be considered here.

6.29 It is considered that paragraph 155 of the NPPF is satisfied.

6.30 In summary, local plan policies D/10 and G5 collectively restrict development within POL to that which would be acceptable were it in the Green Belt. The above assessment considers the proposals against Green Belt policy at paragraph 153 and 155.

Conclusion

6.31 Having regard to the provisions of Core Strategy Policy G5 and Saved UDP Policy D/10 the principle of development of a much needed SEN school on the site should be considered acceptable. It is modest in scale and constitutes limited infilling within an existing area of development. The proposal is also sensitively designed with high quality landscaping. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF states that local authorities should give 'great weight' to the need to create schools. Given the justification presented above, and the great weight that should be applied, then it is judged that on balance the proposals are wholly acceptable in principle.

Principle of Development – Greenspace Corridor

6.32 The site falls in land designated as a Greenspace Corridor. Saved UDP Policy G/8 protects these designated areas but states that development and other measures which will enhance their recreational, ecological or landscape and amenity value will be permitted. Core Strategy Policy G6 also builds on the above and expects new development in Green Space Corridors to not sever, or impede the key functions of designated greenspace corridors or river valleys, or detract from their natural, visual or recreational quality, but enhance their value and accessibility.

- 6.33 The site is privately owned and is not publicly accessible and therefore currently does not offer any recreational value. However, the existing site does offer ecological value and provide some limited relief from surrounding urban development. The application is supported by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) prepared by E3P. This report confirms the potential ecological constraints at the site, and recommends mitigation which should be incorporated into the scheme. Such mitigation includes lighting design to respond to sensitive habitats and precautionary measures for species such as nesting birds.
- 6.34 A further survey for Great Crested Newt is recommended and would need to be undertaken at waterbody 1 (if accessible) between April and June inclusive. If the eDNA survey returns a positive result, then a license will be required to undertake works onsite.
- 6.35 Subject to adhering with the recommendations of the PEA and the recommended mitigation, the proposals would not give rise to unacceptable impacts on ecology. The proposed development will also enhance the biodiversity value through the proposed landscaping and biodiversity enhancements which are proposed on-site to comply with BNG requirements.
- 6.36 With regard to landscape qualities, the site is categorised as being in the Urban Fringe Farmland Landscape Character Area. The development responds to the 'farmland' character of the surroundings through materials that are commensurate with a rural setting, such as timber-effect cladding, standing seam and muted shades for the home zone panels. As is described earlier in this statement, the site is already read in the context of surrounding development and is well screened by vegetation on a number of the site boundaries. Short range views will be impacted, but these are generally from within the site or from within private residences which overlook the site. A condensed LVA has been undertaken and is provided at Appendix 2 of this statement. The concludes that the landscape impacts are justified.
- 6.37 Overall, it is not considered that the proposed development would have significant adverse landscape and visual impacts given the site's spatial and visual relationship with existing built form, site levels and boundary vegetation. Should the decision maker regard there to be landscape and visual harm as a result of the proposals, this should given weight but less than 'great' weight in the overall planning balance. This is considered a fair weighting given the

need for a proportionate response to harm to reflect the importance and status of local landscape designations relative to the 'great' weight that must be afforded to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes required by NPPF paragraph 189.

- 6.38 The proposal is deemed to be acceptable when assessed against Saved UDP policy G/8; Core Strategy Policy G6; and, the relevant PfE policies JP-G1, JP-G2., JP-G7, JP-G8.

Impact on Playing Fields

- 6.39 The proposed access route will be facilitated by a small parcel of land being gifted from the Edgar Wood Academy site. The land to be gifted comprises peripheral land adjacent to the school's playing fields, and would not reduce sporting capacity of the playing field, result in the loss of sporting provision, reduce the size of the pitch or result in the inability to use the pitch. This is demonstrated on the submitted drawings. The proposals would therefore be acceptable when appraised against Sport England's Playing Pitch Policy Exception 3. With regard to paragraph 104 of the NPPF, the marginal area to be lost would be replaced by better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location, in accordance with paragraph 104 b).

Design

- 6.40 Amongst other things, at paragraph 135 the NPPF seeks new development to be: a high standard of design which functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area; be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and landscaping; and, establish or maintain a strong sense of place. Locally, CS policy P3 requires all new developments, including associated landscaping, regardless of location in the borough, to adhere to high standards of design and goes on to list relevant design principles. Further to this, CS policy DM1 sets out general development requirements and details a list of criteria which all development proposals will be expected to demonstrate compliance with, including the need for high quality design. PfE policy JP-P1 Sustainable Places states the aim to become one of the most liveable city regions in the world, consisting of a series of beautiful, healthy and varied places.

- 6.41 In terms of the design, the proposed building is considered to be of an appropriate scale to its setting. It is also a creative response to the site constraints that provides visual interest through the use of a complimentary palette of materials, the proposed building form and layout, its interaction with outdoor spaces, and the articulated roof design feature. The landscaping proposals involve a nature trail with potential for a forest school, a sensory courtyard with ornamental shrubs, grasses and tree planting, a wildflower meadow and native tree planting.
- 6.42 A Crime Impact Assessment has been submitted which confirms the positive aspects of the proposal with respect to security. The report also makes recommendations for physical security measures and management / maintenance measures to further enhance the security credentials of the development. The submitted Energy and Sustainability Statement also discusses design measures which are proposed to contribute to energy efficiency, including:
- A high-performance building envelope to minimise heat loss.
 - Efficient building services, including air source heat pumps and mechanical ventilation with heat recovery (MVHR).
 - On-site renewable energy generation through photovoltaic (PV) panels.
- 6.43 The proposals are considered to be consistent with the relevant policies of the NPPF; the NDG; Core Strategy policies P1, P2, P3 and DM1; and PpE policies JP-P1, JP-S2, and JP-S6.

Heritage Assessment

- 6.44 The application site is not within a Conservation Area, nor does it contain any listed buildings. The site is located in proximity to the Birch Conservation Area which lies to the north of the site. The Birch Village Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) states '*The special architectural and historic interest of the Birch Conservation Area lies predominantly in its distinctive townscape (formed along the line of Heywood Old Road) as well as its association with notable architect, Edgar Wood.*' Special interest of the area is associated with the early 19th century industrial architecture and the late 19th century Arts and Crafts style housing, which forms ribbon development along Heywood Old Road. The CAA describes that Birch Mill gave rise to residential buildings in the area to house the mill workers, and the parish church a result of the growing population. The close historic relationship between industry,

domestic and ecclesiastical buildings of the settlement are therefore central to the character of the village. The partial decline of the village in the late 18th century and subsequent improvements by notable architect Edgar Wood is significant to the historic, and architectural interest of the village.

- 6.45 The greenspaces within and immediately surrounding the Conservation Area lend to the understanding of the historic development of the village in a rural context. The application site is considered to make a relatively limited contribution to the setting of the Conservation Area given that this open land is framed by development including the Edgar Wood Academy, housing on Wrigley Fold and 588-600 Heywood Old Road (which are excluded from the Conservation Area). The application site is visible only in limited views into the Conservation Area, and therefore while there may be some distant co-visibility of the proposed development with longer range views into the Conservation Area taken from viewpoints on Heywood Old Road looking north, these views are recessive and already impacted by development including the Edgar Wood Academy. A large part of the site will remain open and free from built development, while the proposed landscaping will also assist in providing greening and screening to the relatively modest single storey building. Furthermore, this is not identified as a 'view' in the CAA.
- 6.46 The architectural significance of the Conservation Area is appreciated and experienced from within the boundary of the Conservation Area (as identified by the 'views' in the CAA), in these locations the application proposals are sufficiently screened from views by the topography, vegetation and built form. It is worth highlighting that the pre-application response noted the following in relation to heritage impact 'The Council's Conservation Officer has also been consulted and offers no objection from a historic environment conservation perspective. The application site lies in proximity to the Birch Village Conservation Area but confirms that the development would have no impact on what the conservation area designation has set out to achieve'.
- 6.47 It is acknowledged that that in the pre-application response GMAAS have requested that a geophysical survey is undertaken to inform future archaeological evaluation. The comments note that any below ground archaeology is not anticipated to be of the order above local

to regional. It is suggested that archaeological evaluation at the site is dealt with via planning condition.

- 6.48 Taking account of the above assessment, it is judged that the development will not have an adverse impact on the significance / setting of the Birch Conservation Area. On this basis the development is consistent with Paragraph 216 of the NPPF, and other relevant heritage policies of the NPPF; PfE policy JP-P2; and Core Strategy policy P2.

Amenity

- 6.49 Paragraph 135 of the NPPF requires that new development achieves a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. This is reflected locally through CS policy DM1 which requires development proposals to ensure that they “do not adversely affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy”.
- 6.50 At its closest point, the proposed building maintains approximately 55m separation from the rear boundary of residential gardens to the northeast, namely dwellings on Wiggley Fold and Creton Way. Given the single storey nature of the proposals, together with the elevated position of the housing compared with the school building, this distance is considered more than sufficient to prevent any impacts from overbearing or loss of privacy. The proposed external areas including the nature trail is sited closer to the residential development, however it noted that this area will only be in use at limited times. A Noise Impact Assessment prepared by Miller Goodhall. This assesses the proposed development including impacts associated with the development including external areas, access road, and plant. The report concludes there would be no undue noise impacts upon neighbouring users as a result of noise emissions from the site.
- 6.51 An External Lighting Assessment prepared by Miller Goodhall also supports the application, this confirms that the proposed lighting would not give rise to any undue loss of amenity of neighbouring occupiers.

- 6.52 In overview it is concluded that the proposed scheme will ensure that the amenity of existing residents within the vicinity of the site will not be adversely affected. On this basis the scheme is consistent with paragraph 135 of the NPPF, and Core Strategy Policy DM1.

Access and Highways

- 6.53 The application is supported by a Transport Assessment prepared by SCP. This report confirms that the site benefits from a good walking and cycling network alongside good public transport links, which future staff will benefit from. The proposed parking provision has been assessed and deemed adequate. The report also provides an assessment and future modelling of impact on junctions and the highway network. The report concludes that proposed development is not anticipated to result in a material impact on the local highway network.
- 6.54 The Council's pre-application response confirmed that the Council had no objection to the proposals on highways grounds. The development is therefore in accordance with relevant national and local highways policy, in particular paragraph 116 of the NPPF, which 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, following mitigation, would be severe, taking into account all reasonable future scenarios.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 6.55 The site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is the lowest level of risk, and it is not at elevated risk of surface water flooding. The application is supported by a Drainage Statement prepared by Harley Haddow, and Flood Risk Assessment prepared by LK Consult.
- 6.56 The FRA confirms that the site is considered to be at a negligible to low risk of flooding from all sources and no flood risk mitigation is considered to be required. Notwithstanding, it is recommended that finished floor levels of the proposed school are raised a minimum of 0.15m above external ground levels to further reduce the potential for the ingress of water.

Safe access and egress to the site is available to the south via Heywood Old Road. Overall, the report demonstrates that the site will be safe from flooding and will not result in an increase in flood risk elsewhere.

- 6.57 The Drainage Statement confirms that The drainage strategy will incorporate various Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS), such as tanked permeable paving, a detention basin, oversized pipes, filtration trenches and below ground storage in the form of geocellular crates. Infiltration techniques, such as soakaways, were considered but discounted due to unsuitable infiltration rates. The SuDS proposed will slow down the flows from the proposed development, decreasing the peak discharge rate directed into Whittle Brook.
- 6.58 Based on the conclusions of the submitted reporting, the development is appropriate in terms of flood risk and drainage and is in accordance with relevant provisions of the NPPF; PpE policy JP-S4; Core Strategy Policy G8 and DM1; Saved UDP policies EM/7 and EM/8; and the Climate Change Adaptation SPD.

Contamination

- 6.59 The application is supported by a Preliminary Risk Assessment prepared by LK Consult. The report considers site history, geology, hydrogeology, hydrology, mineral search, and a landfill search. Information gathered from the desk study is then used to develop a contamination conceptual model for the site. The conceptual model considers a range of risk and identifies that most of these are low risk although there are some more elevated risks. Accordingly, the report recommends that a Phase 2 Site Investigation is undertaken. The Phase 2 report has been submitted in support of the application, and concludes that based on the findings of the site investigation and risk assessment, no remediation is required. A watching brief for any unexpected contamination should be maintained during groundworks, and any imported soils brought to site for use in gardens / so landscaping should be validated to ensure they are suitable for use.

- 6.60 This mitigation recommendation can be ensured through an appropriately worded planning condition. Subject to this it is considered that the development will be in accordance with relevant provisions of the NPPF; PpE policy JP-S1; and CS Policy G9.

Mineral Resources

- 6.61 The application site is located on land designated for mineral safeguarding for brick clay and coal, as identified in the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Plan. A Mineral Resource Assessment prepared by Wardell Armstrong was submitted in support of application 20/00912/OUT for the Edgar Wood Academy which opened in 2022. The report concluded that “The survey area is in the mineral safeguarding area for “Brick clay with surface-mined shallow coal” but the BGS geological map shows that the solid strata at the surface actually comprises interbedded mudstone, siltstone and sandstone. Since the safeguarded minerals are either absent or will clearly never be worked, the mineral resource is of no economic value. Consequently, the survey area meets the exemption criteria 2 and 3 specified in Policy 8. The proposed school development is therefore compliant with the mineral safeguarding policy set out in the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Plan”.
- 6.62 Given the proximity of the two sites, it is considered that the same conclusions shall be applicable to this site.

Sustainable Development

- 6.63 This Statement has sought to demonstrate that the proposals constitute sustainable development in accordance with paragraph 8 of the NPPF. The development is judged to comply with this based on the below:
- Economic: the proposals will assist RBC in meeting its statutory duty in providing a school places for pupils with an EHCP in a more financially sustainable way. The proposed facility will mean RBC reduce unsustainable Council costs associated with leasing sites, funding places at independent schools, and travel costs.

- Social: the proposals will provide a high quality, purpose built facility for children aged 11-19 who have complex autism. The 64 children with complex autism who will be accommodated at this new satellite site need outside space as part of their ability to learn self-regulation. The proposed scheme therefore offers social benefits in providing the optimal learning environment for their development.
- Environmental: the site is a greenfield site located in protected open land, a robust assessment for the development of the site has been presented within this statement. In addition, the proposals will provide benefits through the proposed landscaping scheme and provision of 10% BNG. The submitted Energy Assessment confirms the energy efficiency measures that will be adopted.

7. Conclusion

7.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Paul Butler Associates to support a planning application for the construction of a new SEN school for up to 64 pupils on land off Heywood Old Road.

7.2 The Statement has considered the key planning matters relating to the application proposal. It has established that the principle of the development is acceptable and in accordance with the 'Protected Open Land' policy. The development will provide landscape enhancements to the site whilst matters relating to protected species, drainage and contamination can be addressed through standard planning conditions. The proposals will deliver significant benefits including:

- Provision of much-needed public infrastructure in a high-quality facility for children and young people in Heywood and Middleton, and across the wider Rochdale Borough, who have autism.
- Provision of much needed SEN school provision within Rochdale which will address existing capacity shortfall issues, thereby reducing Council costs associated with funding alternative provision.
- Co-location of the new satellite school site next to an existing school will give benefits to existing school children in the area and will boost integration for children with SEN needs. The site layout has been designed to minimise impacts upon neighbouring residents where possible.
- Provision of soft landscaping and tree planting which will have biodiversity benefits.
- Provision of a development with adequate vehicle parking and a dedicated off-road drop off lay by.
- The new school will reduce traffic across the wider area by providing specialist school places within the Heywood / Middleton area. This will reduce travel to school distances for the most vulnerable children and help address the issue of children of having to travel out of borough for SEN school provision.
- Securing direct investment into the local community through the provision of jobs during the construction and operational phase of the development.

- 7.3 It is submitted that there are no adverse impacts identified that would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits in favour of granting planning permission when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. The proposals are therefore considered to amount to sustainable development, and should be approved without delay.