



Yeargate Limited

PLANNING STATEMENT

Land North of Birch Business Park

August 2026

UK0040790





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WSP

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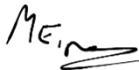
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PROPOSED SITE PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This application seeks outline planning permission Outline planning application (with all matters reserved other than access) for employment development comprising industrial and warehouse floorspace (Use Classes B2 and B8) together with ancillary class E office, with supporting loading bays, trailer bays, trailer park spaces, parking spaces, landscaping, infrastructure and associated works on land to the north of Birch Business Park, Rochdale.

The site is allocated for employment in the Places for Everyone Plan under 'Policy JP Allocation 1.1 Heywood / Pilsworth (Northern Gateway)'. The allocation seeks to deliver a total of around 1,200,000 m2 of industrial and warehousing space (with around 935,000 m2 being delivered within the plan period).

The wider Birch Business Park is an Employment Allocation within the Core Strategy. The principle of development has therefore long been established.

Reasons why consent should be granted

The site is allocated for employment purposes and therefore the development fully accords with policy. The proposals are supported by a suite of technical reports that demonstrate the location and scale of the proposal is acceptable in planning terms.

The proposed development will meet a borough wide and local need for employment whilst assisting the Council and Greater Manchester in delivering a strategic employment allocation. It will create innovation, strengthen supply chains, and aligns with the SPD's ambition to attract advanced manufacturing investment within Atom Valley, contributing to Greater Manchester's economic competitiveness and inclusive growth.

The NPPF is focused on building a strong and competitive economy, and supporting sustainable development. This proposal wholly accords with those principles.

The landscaping strategy provides enhancements to the site boundaries through additional tree and hedge planting. The development will be suitably screened from the public realm and integrates well with the surrounding business park and the future development of the wider Northern Gateway allocation.

The scheme is technically and environmentally acceptable.

The application is supported by technical assessments, including an Environmental Statement that clearly demonstrate that the proposed development is technically and environmentally acceptable in terms of design and sustainability, highways impact, flood risk/drainage, landscape and ecological impact.

The proposed development is therefore in full accordance with local and national planning policy and guidance relating to environmental effects of development.

The scheme will deliver substantial benefits to the Borough

There are a number of significant benefits associated with the development:

- Significant economic benefits including;

- Creation of temporary employment during the construction phase equivalent to circa 56 direct full time equivalent (FTE) construction workers being employed on a full-time basis for twelve months;
 - Full-time employment once operational equating to circa 201 to 380 direct full time jobs;
 - Additional expenditure in the local economy, equating to additional GVA of £5.6m in the construction phase and £7.6m to £13.8m annually once operational with a potential regional impact between £13.4m - £24.1m; and
 - Promoting further investment within the Borough as part of one of Greater Manchester's largest employment allocations
- Assisting the Council in delivering strategic aspirations for the site and wider area;
 - Social benefits through significant job creation both during construction and once operational with a range of positions created. New employment would be accessible to a range of the local community including disadvantaged residents of the Borough; and
 - Environmental benefits such as new landscaping and tree planting with a net gain in biodiversity.

Planning Balance

The enclosed design and access statement and landscape strategy demonstrates that a “landscape-led” scheme has been progressed which results in an illustrative masterplan which includes significant green linkages throughout.

The plan demonstrates how the scheme can retain and enhance existing natural assets where possible, provide ecological benefits, and mitigates any potential landscape or visual effects.

The principle of development is acceptable and has long been established, and the extensive technical assessments demonstrate that the proposed development clearly constitutes sustainable development.

As such, the proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and, in line with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, should be approved without delay.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared by WSP on behalf of Yeagate Limited. The purpose of this Planning Statement is to assist Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council (the Council) in the consideration of an outline planning application at land to the north of Birch Business Park for:
- “Outline planning application (with all matters reserved other than access) for employment development comprising industrial and warehouse floorspace (Use Classes B2 and B8) together with ancillary class E office, with supporting loading bays, trailer bays, trailer park spaces, parking spaces, landscaping, infrastructure and associated works.”***
- 1.1.2. The application comprises the erection of two industrial units of B2/B8 use classes (with ancillary Class E office floorspace) to the north of Birch Business Park.
- 1.1.3. In terms of the wider area context and local vernacular, existing units within the wider Business Park are severely outdated having been initially constructed in the 1940's. This application follows the recent approval at Unit B, Unit G and Unit D which have expanded the business park to provide modern warehouses for industrial and manufacturing purposes.
- 1.1.4. This statement provides a robust appraisal of relevant planning policies, guidance and other material considerations and demonstrates that the proposed development is acceptable both in principle and in terms of technical matters. It provides an overview of the need for the development and sets out the economic benefits that the development will generate for the Borough, within a strategic industrial location.
- 1.1.5. This statement sets out that there are multiple material considerations which weigh in favour of the scheme.

1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 1.2.1. The proposed development is located adjacent to a major scheme that has already been subject to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- 1.2.2. The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 specify that certain types of development require an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) to be undertaken. This includes development known as 'Schedule 1 development' which always requires EIA, or 'Schedule 2 development' which requires an EIA only if the development meets or exceeds given thresholds and is likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size, or location. The proposed development type is considered under Schedule 2 (10. Infrastructure Projects) and falls under category 10 (b) Urban Development Projects.

1.3 STRUCTURE

- 1.3.1. This Planning Statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2 sets out the site context and the planning history associated with the application site;
 - Section 3 provides an overview on the pre-application discussions with the Council in addition to the stakeholder and community engagement exercise undertaken prior to submission;
 - Section 4 outlines the proposed development;



- Section 5 sets out the relevant planning policies at a local and national level;
- Section 6 provides the case for development and explains why the principle of development is acceptable;
- Section 7 assesses other material considerations; and
- Section 8 sets out the conclusions.

2 SITE CONTEXT

2.1.1. The Google extract below provides a clear overview of the site, with the site outlined in red.

Figure 2-1 - Site Context Map



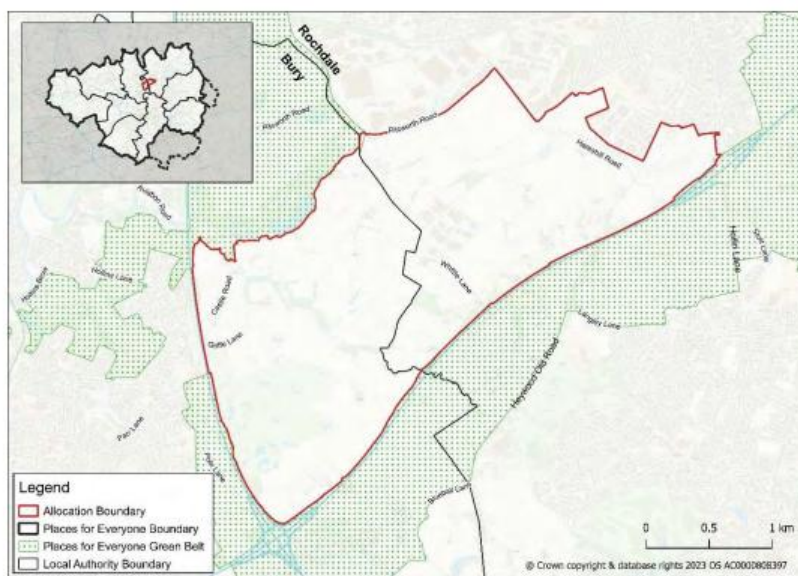
- 2.1.2. The site itself is 4 hectares and is currently vacant open land.
- 2.1.3. Heywood Distribution Park lies circa 600m northwest of the site. There is also a major application currently under determination by the Council for a large parcel of the wider Northern Gateway allocation (ref: 25/00418/OUT) which lies west of the site. As such, despite the existing rural surroundings, the wider character of the site will be transformed by development and built form in the coming years.
- 2.1.4. Access into the business park is currently taken off Whittle Lane with a series of internal roads providing access to each individual unit.
- 2.1.5. The site is bound by the existing units at Birch Business Park to the west and open fields define the sites northern, southern and eastern boundaries.
- 2.1.6. Birch Business Park is located to the south west of Heywood, to the north of the M62. The site is a major developed employment site, accessed off Whittle Lane. The business park comprises a range of buildings and units in B2/B8 use classes. A Site Location Plan can be found at **Appendix A**.
- 2.1.7. Birch Business Park has undergone significant investment over the last 15 years to modernise the business park and individual units, most of which were erected in the 1940's. The site is currently made up of units ranging in size from 366m² (3,935 sqft) to 6,947m² (74,780 sqft), with a range of building heights. This range of unit sizes provides premises for businesses ranging from distribution to manufacturing.
- 2.1.8. In terms of transport links, the site benefits from being in close proximity to the M60, M62 and M66 providing quick and easy access Greater Manchester and beyond.

- 2.1.9. In terms of designations the site falls within Flood Zone 1 and is not in a sensitive location. The site does not lie within a Conservation Area, and there are no listed buildings close to the site.

2.2 PLANNING DESIGNATIONS

- 2.2.1. Following the adoption of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Places for Everyone Joint Plan (PfE) and the removal of the JPA 1.1 Allocation Site from the Green Belt, the Rochdale UDP Policies Map has been superseded.
- 2.2.2. The site is designated for development under 'Policy JP Allocation 1.1 Heywood / Pilsworth (Northern Gateway)' within PfE. The allocation seeks to deliver a total of around 1,200,000 m² of industrial and warehousing space (with around 935,000 m² being delivered within the plan period).

Figure 2-2 - PfE Allocation



2.3 PLANNING HISTORY

- 2.3.1. The continued development of Birch Business Park to meet the changing needs of the industrial market is demonstrated through the range of planning applications that have been submitted over time. The table below provides a summary of these that are of relevance to the application.

Table 2-1 - Planning History

Planning Reference	Description	Decision Date	Status
22/01148/FUL	Demolition of Units B and G and erection of a warehouse unit (Class B2/B8) with ancillary office space (Class E) including parking, servicing areas, associated works and infrastructure.	19 Dec 2022	Approved
20/00955/FUL	Retrospective demolition of Unit D and erection of a B2/B8 warehouse unit with ancillary B1(a) office space at Birch Business Park including ancillary	7 Dec 2020	Approved

Planning Reference	Description	Decision Date	Status
	office, parking and servicing areas, associated works and infrastructure		
19/00092/REM	Submission of reserved matters pursuant to outline planning permission 18/01048/VRCON relating to the means of access, appearance and landscaping in relation to phase 1 of the development.	20 Feb 2019	Approved
18/01048/VRCON	The imposition of additional planning condition to planning permission reference 16/01455/OUT to allow the site to be developed in 2 phases. Subsequent variation in the wording of conditions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 17 and the removal of condition 15 for achievement of very good or excellent BREEAM rating.	14 Dec 2018	Approved
16/01455/OUT	Outline planning permission by means of layout and scale for the erection of 3 industrial units of B2/B8 use (with ancillary B1) including the provision of car parking and associated infrastructure including the demolition of existing commercial units.	11 Oct 2017	Approved

3 PRE-APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT

- 3.1.1. The applicant sought informal pre-application advice from the Council in relation to the proposed development.

3.2 OVERVIEW

- 3.2.1. The pre-application engagement process undertaken by the applicant and the project team has considered relevant national and local policy guidance. The importance of pre-application consultation and community engagement are emphasised in the following:
- Localism Act (2011);
 - National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024); and
 - Rochdale Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (August 2021).
- 3.2.2. The NPPF promotes effective engagement between applicants, communities, LPAs and other interested parties throughout the process. Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that applicants should work closely with those directly affected by their proposals to evolve designs that take account of the views of the community.
- 3.2.3. Paragraph 5.9 of the Council's SCI states that:
- "Involvement in the process can often be useful before an application is formally submitted. The Council encourages applicants to undertake discussions with us prior to submitting their application. This will help to identify key issues and planning policies and identify any problems at an early stage, such as the need for a traffic assessment or flood risk assessment, to enable the applicant to address them".*
- 3.2.4. Paragraph 5.10 goes on to state:
- "For significant development proposals, the Council has adopted guidance to encourage applicants/developers to consult with the local community before submitting their application. This enables the applicants to explain their proposals, receive feedback on which they might be able to act, create an atmosphere of genuine interest in the views of the local community and provide more certainty about any level of concern and the issues of concern."*
- 3.2.5. It is against this background that consultation with the LPA, local community and Councillors has been undertaken.

3.3 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY

- 3.3.1. Given the prominence of the site the applicant has undertaken extensive pre-application discussions with RBC over the last year with initial discussions commencing in 2025. Various iterations of sketch layouts and the vision for the site have been discussed with officers.
- 3.3.2. Formal pre-application meetings have been held with planning officers at RBC. These meetings were attended by members of the project team, including planning consultant and technical consultants where necessary.

- 3.3.3. The key discussion points at the meetings included:
- Principle of development of the site;
 - Master planning of the site;
 - Relationships between the application site and surrounding area;
 - Landscape and ecology;
 - Highway matters; and
 - Environmental Impact Assessment.
- 3.3.4. The purpose of the meeting was to better understand the Council's aspirations for the site, the planning considerations which would need to be addressed as part of a planning application submission, and to confirm the scope of the application.
- 3.3.5. The Council were generally positive about the proposed development and relayed that they would support an application at the site which accords with Places for Everyone Policy JP Allocation 1.1 Heywood / Pilsworth (Northern Gateway).
- 3.3.6. Specific feedback from the Council included:
- Officers broadly agree with the proposed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) approach;
 - Development should follow Northern Gateway Development Framework (NGDF) principles;
 - Submission should demonstrate how the proposal fits within the wider allocation and masterplan, including design code considerations;
 - Suggested viewpoint locations for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) are appropriate;
 - High-quality design required; appearance should echo Birch Business Park materials and NGDF principles; and
 - Proposals should follow mitigation hierarchy and provide raw baseline data, habitat maps, and a BNG statement.
- 3.3.7. The feedback received has been valuable and has positively shaped the current scheme which fit with the ambitions of Rochdale's Core Strategy and the aspirations for this site within the Places for Everyone Joint Plan.
- 3.3.8. The Council's comments have been taken on board and the proposed scheme put forward as part of the current application seeks to respond positively to the advice received. Specifically, the following design changes have been actioned following the pre-application engagement exercise:
- The proposed development has been orientated to maximise opportunities for green infrastructure and permeability and to ensure the proposed development can be integrated satisfactorily into the landscape including buffers.
- 3.3.8. The Council's official pre-app pre-app response is attached to **Appendix B**.

3.4 COUNCILLOR ENGAGEMENT

- 3.4.1. In June 2026 all councillors from the Hopwood Hall Ward were consulted prior to launching a public engagement exercise.
- 3.4.2. Councillors were advised that the design team could be made available to attend a meeting prior to the launch to field any queries they may have.

3.5 CONSULTATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

- 3.5.1. The consultation process for this application was designed to allow the local community to view the draft proposals and share their feedback with the team before the scheme is finalised and the application is submitted.
- 3.5.2. As a result, a letter, which provided details of the proposals was distributed to 17 properties across the area closest to the proposed development site. Letters were posted in early mid June 2026 and contained a copy of the site location along with contact details and further detail of the scheme proposals.

3.6 RESPONSES

- 3.6.1. Two responses were received from local residents who raised broadly the following issues:
- Does not object in principle to economic development but seeks assurances and mitigation to ensure the scheme balances economic growth with protection of residential amenity;
 - The indicative proposals, at heights of up to 18 metres, are considered substantial in scale;
 - Concerned about the visual impact of the development and the potential loss of open outlook currently enjoyed by local residents;
 - Concerned that increased HGV traffic, loading activities and vehicle movements could result in:
 - Increased noise disturbance;
 - Traffic congestion;
 - Deterioration in air quality; and
 - Impacts during early mornings, evenings and weekends.
 - Requests clarification on the transport and highway impacts, including expected traffic routes, impacts on Moss Hall Road and Pilsworth Road, and measures to prevent HGVs using unsuitable local roads, particularly near the primary school;
 - Questions the economic and planning justification for the development, including the types of jobs that would be created, likely occupiers, benefits to local residents, and the need for additional employment units given existing vacant premises in the area;
 - Raises concerns regarding accessibility and sustainability, noting limited public transport provision, poor pedestrian infrastructure, and the apparent reliance on private car travel;
 - Seeks further information on the visual impact of the development, including whether land regrading or excavation is proposed to reduce the prominence of built form on this elevated and widely visible site; and
 - Requests details on the anticipated construction and delivery timetable for the development.
- 3.6.2. Suggested Mitigation Measures
- Increase the landscaped buffer between the development and nearby homes;
 - Provide additional mature tree planting to soften the appearance of the proposals;
 - Restrict HGV movements and loading operations during night-time hours;

- Install low-level directional lighting to minimise light pollution; and
- Undertake a comprehensive noise assessment and incorporate appropriate mitigation measures into the scheme.

3.7 SUMMARY

- 3.7.1. This Statement of Community Involvement has demonstrated that extensive pre-application consultation and engagement has taken place in the lead up to submitting the planning application. This includes engagement with Council officers, Ward Councillors and the local community.
- 3.7.2. This engagement has been helpful and the feedback received has been considered as the proposed scheme has evolved and development parameters fixed. Much of the feedback received relates to the detailed design of the scheme, which will be addressed through subsequent consultation exercises at the Reserved Matters planning stage.
- 3.7.3. Overall, the application accords with the approach to pre-application consultation and has been prepared in the context of the NPPF (2024), Localism Act and RBC's SCI.

4 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 4.1.1. The description of development is as follows;

“Outline planning application (with all matters reserved other than access) for employment development comprising industrial and warehouse floorspace (Use Classes B2 and B8) together with ancillary class E office, with supporting loading bays, trailer bays, trailer park spaces, parking spaces, landscaping, infrastructure and associated works.”

- 4.1.2. The Proposed Site Plan can be found at **Appendix C** with full details of the proposed design and access arrangements contained within the supporting Design and Access Statement.

4.2 LAYOUT AND USE

- 4.2.1. The proposals provide commercially attractive and modern units whilst ensuring that the sites constraints have been appropriately considered.
- 4.2.2. The proposals will compromise warehouse floorspace with supporting office and ancillary facilities.
- 4.2.3. Traffic will access the Site via the existing priority junction connecting Birch Business Park to Moss Hall Road. From there, vehicles will proceed northeast along the internal site road. Access to the Proposed Development will be provided through a new, simple priority-controlled T-junction, positioned off the internal road within Birch Business Park. Separate parking areas will be provided for cars and HGV's. Sufficient space has been provided for HGV's to turnaround internally within the curtilage of the units.
- 4.2.4. The proposed HGV parking will be situated in the centre of the site with the two units either side and landscaping on the outer edges/boundary to screen the development from surrounding public vantage points and to reduce the impact of the proposals from a landscape perspective.
- 4.2.5. Layout will be secured at reserved matters stage.
- 4.2.6. The proposal seeks consent for B2/B8 use with ancillary office use. This aligns with the composition expected by Policy JPA1.1, including the potential for advanced manufacturing.

4.3 SCALE

- 4.3.1. Permission is sought for a total of 12,241 m² GIA of B2/B8 floorspace including ancillary office floorspace. The following parameters are proposed
- Proposed Unit A will have a total gross internal floorspace of 6,452 m² and a ridge height of up to 18m; and
 - Proposed Unit B will have a gross internal floorspace of 5,789 m² and a ridge height of up to 18m.
- 4.3.2. The proposed size and height of the units will ensure that units meet the market demand.
- 4.3.3. Scale will be secured at reserved matters stage.

4.4 APPEARANCE

- 4.4.1. The appearance will be secured at reserved matters stage but it is likely that the proposal will reflect the surrounding business park and contemporary design principles in creating a high-quality warehouse/industrial buildings.

4.5 LANDSCAPING

- 4.5.1. A comprehensive landscape strategy landscape strategy has been prepared.
- 4.5.2. The landscape strategy strengthens the sites southern, northern and eastern boundaries with additional tree and hedgerow planting. The strategy ensures that the proposals will be well screened.
- 4.5.3. The conclusions of the supporting Landscape Visual Impact Assessment confirm that as the landscape develops and matures it will help to assimilate the proposed development into its immediate site and surroundings, providing a high level of screening.
- 4.5.4. Landscaping will be secured at reserved matters stage.

4.6 ACCESS, CIRCULATION AND PARKING

- 4.6.1. Traffic will access the Site via the existing priority junction connecting Birch Business Park to Moss Hall Road. From there, vehicles will proceed northeast along the internal site road. Access to the Proposed Development will be provided through a new, simple priority-controlled T-junction, positioned off the internal road within Birch Business Park.
- 4.6.2. Clear separation of HGVs and cars is provided, with a clearly separated yard and car parking.
- 4.6.3. Consideration of Rochdale MBC's parking standards has been given in determining the required parking provision proposed for the unit. The scheme will be supported by a total of 121 car parking spaces, 16 accessible car parking spaces 24 cycle parking spaces, and 6 powered two-wheeler parking spaces.
- 4.6.4. The proposed layout provides the most direct pedestrian route from the footpath into the development site and avoids the need for the crossing of access roads and HGV routes.

5 PLANNING POLICY

- 5.1.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.1.2. The adopted Development Plan for the Borough mainly comprises the Rochdale Core Strategy (adopted October 2016), saved policies of the Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan (adopted June 2006) and the adopted Places for Everyone (2024).
- 5.1.3. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2024) is also a material consideration for development management purposes.
- 5.1.4. This chapter sets out the relevant planning policies and guidance contained within the NPPF, PfE, Local Plan Core Strategy and the Saved UDP. These are then appraised in subsequent chapters.

5.2 NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

- 5.2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in 2024 and is a key material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

- 5.2.2. Sustainable Development means meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (paragraph 8). The planning system has three overarching objectives in achieving sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT

- 5.2.3. All developments that generate significant amounts of movements are to be supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan. Decisions on proposals should take account of whether opportunities for sustainable transport modes have been taken up, safe and suitable access can be achieved, and improvements can limit the significant impacts of the development.
- 5.2.4. Paragraph 117 sets out that developments should be located and designed where practical to give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and have access to high-quality public transport facilities.

MAKING EFFECTIVE USE OF LAND

- 5.2.5. Paragraph 124 states that decisions should promote the effective use of land. Paragraph 126 seeks to encourage LPAs to take a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that may be suitable for meeting development needs.

ACHIEVING WELL-DESIGNED PLACES

- 5.2.6. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. It creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

- 5.2.7. Paragraph 135 stresses that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, sympathetic to the local character, establish a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development and support local facilities and transport networks, and address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

- 5.2.8. Paragraph 187 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes by (among other things) protecting valued landscapes, minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains, and mitigating and remediating despoiled, degraded and derelict land.

BUILDING A STRONG, COMPETITIVE ECONOMY

- 5.2.9. Specifically, paragraph 85 clearly states that planning decisions should create the conditions to allow businesses to invest, expand and adapt. It states:

“Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.”

- 5.2.10. Paragraph 87 importantly acknowledges the need to recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors at a variety of scales and in suitable accessible locations.

5.3 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 5.3.1. The adopted Development Plan for the area comprises the Rochdale Core Strategy and Saved Policies of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

SAVED UNITARY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (UDP)

- 5.3.2. The site lies outside of the Defined Urban Area and within the Green Belt as designated under Saved Policy G/D/2 of the UDP. Core Strategy policy G4 states that development in the Green Belt will be restricted unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. To note, following the adoption of PfE, the site and wider area has been released from the Green Belt.

- 5.3.3. Other key policies include:

- EM/7 Development and Flood Risk; and
- EM/8 Protection of Surface and Ground Water.

ROCHDALE CORE STRATEGY (CS)

- 5.3.4. Core Strategy strategic objective SO1 requires a key emphasis on identifying quality employment sites and areas to increase the number and range of jobs and employment levels

- 5.3.5. The Core Strategy sets out in policy SD1 the emphasis placed on delivering sustainable development with the Council taking a positive approach that reflects the Framework. It will seek to work proactively to find solutions which will see approval of proposals wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.
- 5.3.6. The proposed development falls in line with the spatial strategy SP1 'Rochdale Borough's role for the city region' which states that Rochdale Borough will contribute to the success of the Manchester city region and the North West by playing its part in the delivery of sustainable development and investment that meets the need of sub regional objectives for housing and employment growth.
- 5.3.7. Core Strategy Policy P2 sets out that the Council will require new development to integrate successfully with the key natural features of the borough, protect and open up important views of hills and valleys and conserve and enhance townscape character. It sets out the need to conserve, enhance and promote key heritage assets including consideration of their wider settings.
- 5.3.8. Core Strategy Policy G1 sets out measures to address climate change and emissions concerns, whilst Policy G2 requires that new development adhere to the energy hierarchy. All development should be designed in order to meet the requirements of these policies.
- 5.3.9. Core Strategy Policy G7 states that 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. Further policies G8 and G9 seek to ensure that the development does not lead to increased flooding or lead to unacceptable increase in pollution.
- 5.3.10. Core Strategy Policy T2 requires development to be located where there is good access to public transport and so improve accessibility in and around Rochdale. 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.
- 5.3.11. Other relevant policies are listed below:
- G2 Energy and new development;
 - G6 Enhancing green infrastructure;
 - G8 Managing water resources and flood risk;
 - G9 Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability;
 - E2 Increasing jobs and prosperity;
 - E3 Focusing on economic growth corridors and areas; and
 - P3 Improving design of new development.

5.4 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

URBAN DESIGN GUIDE

- 5.4.1. The Urban Design Guide expands on local planning policies and sets design principles for all types of development with the Boroughs of Oldham and Rochdale. These principles identify what development should do to achieve design quality.

5.5 REGIONAL PLANNING POLICY

PLACES FOR EVERYONE

- 5.5.1. Places for Everyone (PfE) is a joint strategy between Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan and was adopted in March 2024. It is a long-term joint development plan for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth and is the strategic plan for Greater Manchester.
- 5.5.2. The site is allocated for development under Policy JP Allocation 1.1 Heywood / Pilsworth (Northern Gateway) through PfE. The allocation seeks to deliver a total of around 1,200,000 m² of industrial and warehousing space (with around 935,000 m² being delivered within the plan period).
- 5.5.3. The allocation aims for development to be of a sufficient scale and quality to enable a significant rebalance in economic growth within the sub-region by boosting the competitiveness of the north of the conurbation.
- 5.5.4. PfE Policy JP Allocation 1.1 contains a number of criteria that any development coming forward within the Allocation Site is required to adhere to:
 1. *“Be in accordance with a comprehensive masterplan, design code and infrastructure phasing and delivery strategy, in line with Policy JP-D1 'Infrastructure Implementation', that has been agreed with the local planning authorities;*
 2. *Be of sufficient scale and quality to enable a significant rebalance in economic growth within the sub-region by boosting the competitiveness of the north of the conurbation and should;*
 3. *Deliver a total of around 1,200,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing space (with around 935,000 sqm being delivered within the plan period). This should comprise a mix of high quality employment premises in an attractive business park setting in order to appeal to a wide range of business sectors including the development of an Advanced Manufacturing Park;*
 4. *Deliver around 1,000 additional homes along with a new primary school in the eastern part of the allocation to support the early delivery of the infrastructure and provide a buffer between existing housing and the new employment development;*
 5. *Deliver around 200 new homes, which includes an appropriate mix of house types and sizes and the provision of plots for custom and self-build housing (subject to local demand, having regard to Bury's self-build register and other relevant evidence), in the west of the allocation off Castle Road ensuring that an appropriate buffer is incorporated to separate this part of the allocation from the wider employment area and that appropriate highways measures are in place to prevent the use of residential roads by traffic associated with the wider employment area;*
 6. *Deliver an appropriate range of supporting and ancillary services and facilities, such as a new local centre, hotel, leisure and conference facilities. These should be in accessible locations and of a genuinely ancillary scale that is appropriate to the main employment use of the allocation;*
 7. *Make provision for new and improved sustainable transport and highways infrastructure having regard to the indicative transport interventions set out in Appendix D in accordance with Policy JP-C8;*
 8. *Make provision for affordable housing in accordance with local planning policy requirements;*

9. *Make financial contributions for offsite additional primary and secondary school provision to meet needs generated by the development in accordance with policy JP-P5;*
10. *Ensure the design and layout allows for effective integration with surrounding communities, including active travel links and connections to local services, employment opportunities and over the M62 to proposed new development at Simister/Bowlee (JPA1.2);*
11. *Retain and enhance existing recreation facilities (including Unsworth Academy playing fields and Pike Fold Golf Course) or, where necessary, make provision for replacement facilities that are equivalent or better in terms of quantity and quality and in a suitable location;*
12. *Make provision for new, high quality, publicly accessible multi-functional green and blue infrastructure including the integration and enhancement of existing features such as Brightly Brook, Whittle Brook and Castle Brook;*
13. *Make provision for compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt in the vicinity of the site in accordance with Policy JP-G2;*
14. *Strengthen the boundary of the Green Belt to the north of the site around Pilsworth Cottages, Brightly Brook and Pilsworth Fisheries such that they will comprise physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent;*
15. *Ensure that any development is safe from and mitigates for potential flood risk from all sources including Whittle Brook, Castle Brook and Brightley Brook and does not increase the flood risk elsewhere. The delivery of the allocation should be guided by an appropriate flood risk and drainage strategy which ensures co-ordination between phases of development;*
16. *Provide an appropriate buffer between the development and the motorway/local road network where required to serve multiple functions including air quality, noise, visual mitigation and high-quality landscaping;*
17. *Take appropriate account of relevant heritage assets, and their settings, including Brick Farmhouse and Lower Whittle Farmhouse Grade II Listed Buildings in accordance with Policy JP-P2;*
18. *Carry out a detailed assessment and evaluation of known and potential archaeological sites including Meadow Croft Farm, historic landscape features and built heritage assets, to establish specific requirements for the protection and enhancement of significant heritage assets;*
19. *Consider the extraction of any viable mineral resources within Mineral Safeguarding Areas, in accordance with Policy 8 of the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Development Plan (or any relevant policies in subsequent minerals plans); and*
20. *Undertake hydrological and ground investigations to determine the extent and quality of any peat identified in the south-western part of the site to inform the potential for restoration and the comprehensive master planning of the site which should ensure that the loss or deterioration of any irreplaceable habitat is avoided."*

- 5.5.5. The strategy highlights through Policy JP-J2 'Employment Sites and Premises' that it will seek to nurture existing employment sites to ensure they remain competitive with their accessibility improved where necessary.

- 5.5.6. Other policies from the Joint Plan which are relevant to the application include JP-S1 Sustainable Development.
- 5.5.7. This policy sets the foundation for all development in Greater Manchester, requiring it to deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits in line with national planning principles. It prioritises the use of brownfield land, promotes efficient land use, and ensures developments contribute to climate resilience, biodiversity protection, and community well-being. The aim is to create sustainable places that balance growth with environmental responsibility.
- 5.5.8. Policy JP-S2 Carbon Energy - Supports Greater Manchester's ambition to achieve carbon neutrality by 2038 by requiring developments to minimise energy demand and integrate renewable and low-carbon technologies. It introduces design guidance and compliance tools to ensure energy efficiency and fossil-fuel-free heating systems. The policy emphasises high-performance building standards and encourages solar PV and other renewable solutions to reduce emissions across all new developments.
- 5.5.9. Policy JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment - This policy ensures that new development avoids areas at highest risk of flooding and incorporates measures to manage water sustainably. It mandates the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and strategies to reduce surface water runoff, while protecting water quality and enhancing climate resilience. The approach aligns with national flood risk guidance to safeguard communities and infrastructure from future climate impacts.
- 5.5.10. Policy JP-J1 Supporting Long-Term Economic Growth – this policy provides a framework for delivering sufficient employment land to meet Greater Manchester's growth ambitions, supporting sectors critical to productivity and the transition to a zero-carbon economy. It prioritises brownfield redevelopment but allows limited Green Belt release for strategic employment sites where justified. The policy aims to create a strong, diverse economy that attracts investment and supports innovation.
- 5.5.11. Policy JP-J2 Employment Site and Premises - This policy safeguards and allocates land for a range of employment uses, including offices, research facilities, and industrial activities. It promotes flexible, high-quality premises that can adapt to changing business needs and attract investment. Accessibility, sustainable transport connections, and proximity to skilled labour are key considerations to ensure employment sites contribute to inclusive economic growth.
- 5.5.12. Policy JP-J4 Industry and Warehousing Development – This policy focuses on providing strategic sites for logistics and manufacturing to support regional and national supply chains. It prioritises locations with strong motorway and rail connectivity and requires developments to meet environmental standards, minimising impacts on communities and biodiversity. The policy balances industrial land needs with Green Belt protection by encouraging the use of previously developed land wherever possible.

THE NORTHERN GATEWAY SPD (2025)

- 5.5.13. In order to support the delivery of the JPA1.1 Allocation Site, Bury and Rochdale Councils have adopted the Northern Gateway Development Framework ('NGDF') (adopted March 2025). The SPD aims to inform the preparation of the Design Codes and Infrastructure Phasing and Delivery Strategy (IPDS) for the site and to effectively bridge the gap between the allocation of the site in PfE

and the subsequent detail of the development that will emerge through planning applications on the site.

5.5.14. The key parts of the NGDF include:

- Delivery of around 1,200,000 m² of high-quality employment space suitable for a range of employment uses including advanced manufacturing, industrial, storage and distribution, as well as around 1,200 new homes, consisting of around 1,000 new homes at South Heywood and around 200 new homes off Castle Road, alongside other ancillary uses;
- Delivery of a permeable, safe and legible network of routes across the JPA1.1 Allocation Site creating a highly accessible and sustainable development which fully integrates into surrounding movement and transport infrastructure and promotes sustainable transport choices; and
- Delivery of a structured network of green and blue routes and spaces helping to provide a meaningful and accessible recreation resource to proposed and surrounding communities, helping to support and enhance local habitats and biodiversity, and provide naturalised mitigation helping limit any negative impacts the development of Northern Gateway may have on its surrounding context.

5.5.15. The below diagrams provide the indicative development framework plan, built form plan, and movement plan provided within the SPD.

Figure 5-1 - Indicative Development Framework

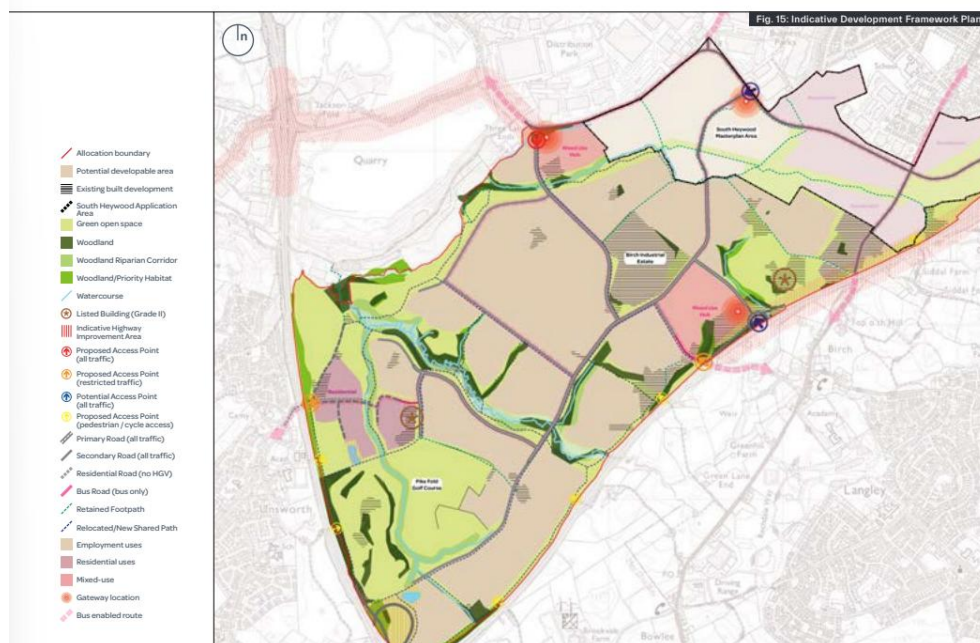


Figure 5-2 - Built Form Plan

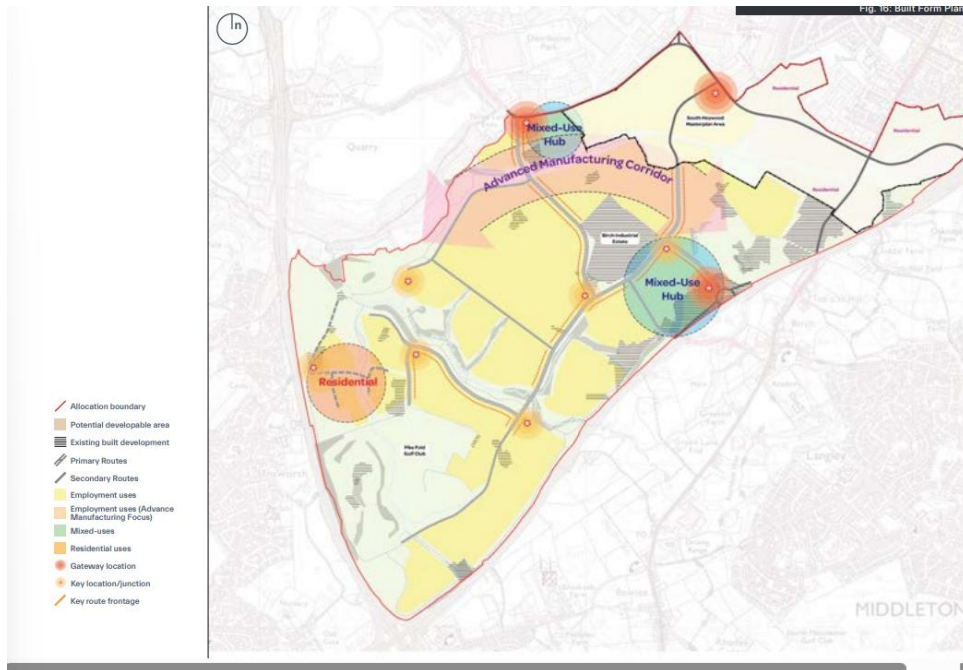
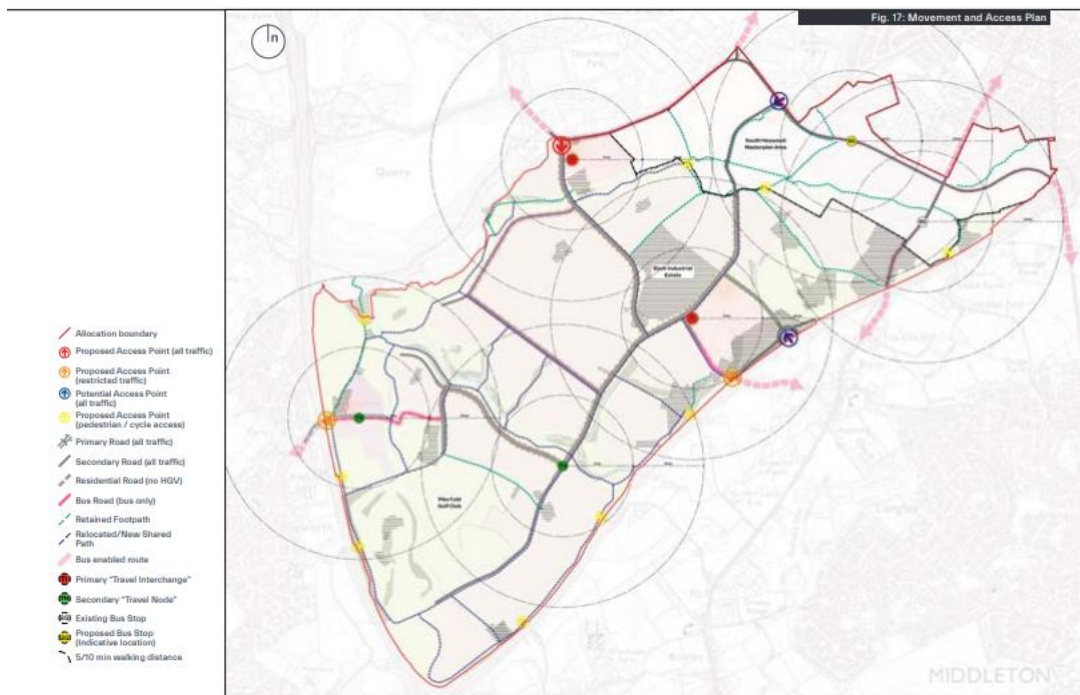


Figure 5-3 - Movement Plan



6 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 6.1.1. The principle of employment use is firmly established at the site through the recent PfE allocation 'Northern Gateway' and removal of the site from the Green Belt. The Northern Gateway allocation is an essential part of the Places for Everyone Joint Plan, particularly to meet the aim of rebalancing the Greater Manchester economy and this site contributes strongly to the aspirations of the allocation.
- 6.1.2. The proposals for B2 and B8 employment development at Birch Business Park directly support the advanced manufacturing objectives of the Northern Gateway Development Framework (JPA1.1) by delivering high-quality industrial floorspace capable of accommodating modern production technologies and logistics operations.
- 6.1.3. This approach will create innovation, strengthen supply chains, and aligns with the SPD's ambition to attract advanced manufacturing investment within Atom Valley, contributing to Greater Manchester's economic competitiveness and inclusive growth.
- 6.1.4. It is recognised that the site and wider allocation have been identified as a large, nationally significant location for new employment-led development within the Northern Gateway opportunity area between Bury and Rochdale.
- 6.1.5. Therefore, the proposed development for B2/B8 use is clearly acceptable in principle.
- 6.1.6. PfE Policy JPA1.1 sets out a series of criteria that any development coming forward within the JPA 1.1 Allocation Site is required to adhere to.
- 6.1.7. This chapter appraises the Proposed Scheme against the specific criteria of relevance.

MASTERPLAN, DESIGN CODE AND INFRASTRUCTURE PHASING AND DELIVERY STRATEGY

- 6.1.8. The masterplan for the site is set out in the NGDF SPD. The proposal has been designed in accordance with the principles within the masterplan. The proposed site layout follows the strategy of the current site infrastructure which has determined the materials used, position and orientation of the proposed new units.
- 6.1.9. The existing soft landscape would be retained where possible and enhanced with new trees and planting used to form screening around the new units and service yards.
- 6.1.10. The further reserved matters application will be in accordance with the established design strategy. Further design justification is set out in the accompanying Design and Access Statement by Fletcher Rae Architects.

SCALE AND QUALITY

- 6.1.11. The proposed scheme comprises employment uses (B2/B8) in alignment with the requirements of the allocation. The scheme will ensure that the unit's provided are modern and of high quality, boosting the economic growth of the area. There is also the potential for advanced manufacturing to come forward.

EMPLOYMENT USES

- 6.1.12. PfE Policy JPA1.1 (Part 3) requires the JPA1.1 Allocation Site to deliver a total of around 1.2 million m² of industrial and warehousing floorspace (with around 935,000 m² being delivered within the plan period 2022 to 2039). The proposal will help meet this aim through the delivery of 12,241 m² GIA of industrial and warehousing floorspace.

SUPPORTING USES

- 6.1.13. The proposal seeks consent for supporting uses through ancillary office space equating to 801 m² (% of the development). The ancillary office use ensures the effective operation of the main industrial and warehousing use. Therefore, in accordance with the allocation, the proposed supporting uses are ancillary to the main development.

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT, HIGHWAYS INFRASTRUCTURE AND ACTIVE TRAVEL

- 6.1.14. As discussed in Chapter 8, a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan has been submitted to support the application. The statement confirms that traffic modelling and percentage impact assessment demonstrates that the level of development-related traffic would not have an adverse effect on the safety or operation of the local highway network.

GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

- 6.1.15. The landscaping for the proposal will be secured at reserved matters stage. However, the proposal seeks to provide tree and hedgerow planting at the site, particularly at the boundaries which will automatically offer a connection to the wider area.

GREEN BELT COMPENSATION AND BOUNDARIES

- 6.1.16. It is likely that this will come through following negotiation of the S.106 Heads of Terms, particularly when the Northern Gateway Infrastructure Phasing and Delivery Strategy is finalised.
- 6.1.17. To assist in strengthening boundaries, the landscaping plan offers boundary tree planting around the vicinity of the site.

FLOOD RISK AND DRAINAGE

- 6.1.18. A Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy has been submitted to support the application. The assessment confirms that the site is located in Flood Zone 1 which is considered as having low probability flooding.
- 6.1.19. A Drainage Strategy aims to outfall runoff to ordinary watercourse on the eastern side of the site. The SUDS assessment concludes that there is potential for rainwater harvesting, and suitability for standard permeable surfacing in private parking bays and implementation of swales, basins and ponds.

- 6.1.20. In regard to foul water drainage, package treatment works on-site are proposed which will treat and discharge to the ordinary watercourse to the east of the site. Overall, therefore, the proposed drainage methods exceed the statutory requirements.

BUFFERS TO MOTORWAY / LOCAL ROAD NETWORK

- 6.1.21. The allocation requires development to incorporate a buffer between the motorway/local road network as necessary. Whilst the site is not adjacent to the motorway, the landscaping scheme incorporates boundary planting which acts as buffer between the site and local road network.
- 6.1.22. The surrounding area is subject to a major scheme known as the Northern Gateway (Ref. 25/00418/OUT). To the east of the Application Site, within the JPA1.1 Allocation Site, is the consented South Heywood Masterplan Area ('SHMA') (RMBC refs. 16/01399/HYBR and 22/01569/OUT). The SHMA has been partially constructed and is ongoing, including the majority of the highway infrastructure (including 'Queen Elizabeth II Way') and some residential development.
- 6.1.23. The Application Site benefits from being in close proximity to existing regionally renowned employment sites at Heywood Distribution Park to the north and Pilsworth Industrial Estate to the east.

BUILT HERITAGE

- 6.1.24. The site does not contain designated or non-designated heritage assets and therefore it is concluded that there will be no impact on built heritage, in accordance with the requirements of the allocation.
- 6.1.25. There are three farmsteads within a 500m radius of the site that are on Rochdale Borough Council's list of non-designated heritage assets and are recorded on the Greater Manchester Historic Environment Record: Broom Hill Farm and Higher Fields Farm and Stock Nook.
- 6.1.26. There are varying degrees of intervisibility between the non-designated heritage assets and the site. The site is not considered to form part of the setting of Broom Hill Farm and there would be no harmful impact on the farmstead is understood, appreciated and experience from the proposed development and its heritage significance would be preserved.

ARCHAEOLOGY

- 6.1.27. The site does not contain any designated archaeological heritage assets and therefore there will be no impact, in accordance with the requirements of the allocation.

MINERALS SAFEGUARDING AND PEATLAND

- 6.1.28. A detailed Phase 1 ground investigation report has been undertaken as part of the application. The Phase 1 report does not raise any issues with regards to mineral safeguarding risks nor does it conclude presence of peatland at the site.

CONCLUSION

- 6.1.29. Therefore, the wider area will be enveloped by large scale employment development, which will require buildings of significant height. As such the parameters proposed within this application will be inconsequential compared to surrounding built form.
- 6.1.30. Policy E2 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will ensure a sufficient supply of suitable land, buildings and infrastructure in the right places to support the creation and retention of successful

businesses and increase the number and quality of jobs. This is echoed in the NPPF which states at paragraph 85 that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

- 6.1.31. The scheme also complies with policy E2 which sets out that the Council will ensure there is a supply of accessible land that is attractive to 21st century employment development for offices, manufacturing and distribution (B1 - B8) as well as other employment generating uses.
- 6.1.32. The proposal seeks to support new economic development within an existing employment area through the provision of modern industrial units. The principle of development is therefore wholly acceptable.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- 6.1.33. Granting permission for the specified quantum of employment floorspace will deliver significant economic benefits for the Borough and wider area.

Economic Benefits

- 6.1.34. The proposal would deliver significant economic benefits and assist in achieving the aspirations of a strategic Places for Everyone (PfE) allocation to create a nationally significant employment hub.
- 6.1.35. Supporting evidence underpinning Places for Everyone forecasts that in 2037 Rochdale will have a requirement for approximately 637,000 sq. m of industry and warehouse employment floor space (which is approximately 20% of Greater Manchester's total future requirement), the highest requirement across all nine Greater Manchester authorities.
- 6.1.36. In light of the above, there is clearly a need for additional employment and industrial space within the Borough.
- 6.1.37. The proposed development will attract new investment and new business to Rochdale Borough.
- 6.1.38. The development comprises modern, high quality employment units. The proposals contribute towards meeting the development needs of the business and supporting a strong, responsive and competitive economy, in accordance with the NPPF.
- 6.1.39. The proposed development would therefore make a significant contribution towards meeting the need to support sustainable economic growth.
- 6.1.40. The temporary construction employment benefits have been assessed based on the anticipated build cost for the Development proposals of £5.6m.
- 6.1.41. Based on information provided by the applicant, it is anticipated that there will be circa 201 and 380 on-site permanent jobs created through the operation of the proposed development. The net additional employment created by the proposed development will have wider economic effects by generating gross value added to the local economy.

SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- 6.1.42. The wider Birch Business Park area is a key contributor to the local economy as well as a key employer, with a significant number of jobs located across Birch Business Park.
- 6.1.43. The site and business park are clearly accessible to many given its connections with the road, motorways, and cycling networks but also its close proximity to the residential area of Heywood.

- 6.1.44. Further social and environmental benefits will be delivered through the delivery of areas of landscaping and tree planting. A comprehensive landscaping strategy supports this submission which enhances the sites boundary.

CONCLUSION

- 6.1.45. This chapter has provided a detailed appraisal of relevant planning policy and guidance in respect of the principle of development. The redevelopment of the site for employment related uses accords with policies JP Allocation 1.1 and guidance within the NPPF.
- 6.1.46. The proposed development will deliver economic, social, and environmental benefits to the area and therefore complies with the themes of achieving sustainable development as defined by the NPPF and Local Plan. The principle of development is therefore wholly acceptable.
- 6.1.47. The following chapter assesses the various technical considerations and potential impacts that the proposed development might result in, cross-referring to relevant planning policy and guidance and the suite of technical documents accompanying this application.

7 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1.1. This chapter focusses on appraising the proposed development in the context of technical planning policies and guidance contained in the Development Plan and NPPF.

7.2 DESIGN

- 7.2.1. The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement prepared by Fletcher Rae Architects. The DAS considers the design, layout, massing, materials, landscaping and the evolution of the proposed development in detail. To note, the final details will be secured through reserved matters.
- 7.2.2. Policy P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy states that all development will be required to adhere to high standards of design. Development should have a positive impact and will be expected to respond to scale, density, massing, height, landscape of surrounding buildings and areas in general whilst respecting existing context.
- 7.2.3. Furthermore, development should have regard to the principles outlined in the Council's Urban Design SPD's which provide further guidance on how development should respond positively and enhance immediate surroundings.
- 7.2.4. The NPPF also provides guidance on development and ensures that the design of development incorporates the principles of sustainable development and the need to create better places in which to live and work. Paragraph 130 sets out several design criteria with the purpose being to ensure that design is of a high quality and appropriate for the area in which the development is located.
- 7.2.5. The proposed development has been designed in accordance with the above guidance;
- The layout, scale and appearance of the proposals have been developed to create a high quality and attractive scheme with integrates well with the wider business park;
 - The elevational treatment has been carefully considered in the context of the sites current setting and recently approved Unit D in order to create a contemporary and attractive appearance;
 - The development includes a detailed landscaping scheme which seeks to strengthen and enhance the sites landscaped boundaries, respecting the wider landscape areas and Green Belt;
 - The development has been designed to respect and protect neighbouring residential amenity and includes appropriate mitigation;
 - The proposal provides easy access for cyclists who can make us of nearby cycleways. The proposal itself incudes cycle parking provision;
 - High efficiency measures have been included within the design of the proposals ensuring that energy efficiency measures are promoted whilst an overall reduction in carbon emissions is implemented; and
 - The development is accessible to all with disabled bays provided.
- 7.2.6. As such, the design of the proposed development is in full accordance with Core Strategy policy P3 as well as paragraph 130 of the NPPF.

7.3 ARCHEALOGY

- 7.3.1. An archaeological desk-based assessment has confirmed that the site holds negligible potential for Roman and early Medieval remains, low potential for Prehistoric remains, moderate potential for Medieval remains, and high potential for post-Medieval remains, all of which are expected to be of no more than local heritage significance.
- 7.3.2. Groundworks associated with the proposed development are likely to permanently truncate or destroy any surviving remains, but impacts can be mitigated through a programme of geophysical survey and further investigation as required, ensuring preservation by record and compliance with national and local planning policy.
- 7.3.3. This assessment and mitigation strategy is fully compliant with Section 16 of the NPPF, specifically paragraphs 212 and 216, which require proportionate assessment and mitigation of impacts on both designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- 7.3.4. The approach also aligns with Rochdale Core Strategy Policy P2, which emphasizes the protection, enhancement, and positive use of heritage assets, including archaeological sites. In addition, Places for Everyone Policy JP-P2 supports the assessment, mitigation, and preservation by record of archaeological assets, ensuring that development proposals contribute positively to the historic environment.

7.4 HIGHWAYS

- 7.4.1. A Transport Assessment and Travel Plan has been prepared by prepared by Axis and has been submitted alongside the application.
- 7.4.2. Overall, it is considered that there are no discernible clusters of accidents that would be cause for concern. Therefore, the existing accident record does not present a material concern in the context of the Proposed Development and the local vehicular access route.
- 7.4.3. Traffic modelling and percentage impact assessment was undertaken as part of the Transport Assessment. The results demonstrate that the level of development-related traffic would not have an adverse effect on the safety or operation of the local highway network.
- 7.4.4. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the Site is currently provided via a priority junction off the internal road within Birch Business Park, located to the south of the Site. This junction is being formalised as part of the development.
- 7.4.5. While the Site has a reasonable level of accessibility by non-car modes, being within walking and cycling distance of surrounding settlements and served by bus and train services, the nature of the business park development means that travel by sustainable transport modes may be limited, particularly for staff and visitors commuting from further afield. Nonetheless, the location does support some potential for travel by walking, cycling, and public transport.
- 7.4.6. In light of the above, the development would not result in adverse impacts on the capacity or safe functioning of the highway as a result of the development and that the requirements of policy T2 of the Core Strategy and NPPF would be met.

7.5 ECOLOGY

- 7.5.1. An e3p Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Biodiversity Metric Report, Reptile Survey Report, and Tyrer Ecological Consultants Breeding Bird Survey Report and Bat Activity Survey Report support this application.
- 7.5.2. The PEA confirms that there are no statutory ecological designations within 1km of the site. Whilst the site lies within the Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI and West Pennine Moors SSSI Impact Risk Zones, the assessment concludes that there would be no significant adverse effects on these risk zones as a result of the development due to its distance away. That being said, the survey found potential for the presence of bats, great crested newts, reptiles, breeding birds, amphibians, badgers, hedgehogs, brown hare, and cinnabar. Further surveys were required to determine potential impact on protected species and their results are below.
- 7.5.3. The presence of great crested newts was found within one of the three waterbodies off-site. Two other waterbodies were identified, though were inaccessible and therefore no testing was able to take place. To mitigate potential development harm on newts, a Natural England District Level Licensing Certificate has been acquired to offset the harm.
- 7.5.4. Following the e3p reptile survey, which included seven separate surveys for reptiles, it has been identified that no reptiles were present on the site at the time of the surveys. As such, further mitigation methods in regard to reptiles are not required. As the presence of common amphibians were identified, it is advised for them to be removed by hand away from construction activities.
- 7.5.5. A total of 32 bird species were identified during the breeding bird survey, with five of those being probable breeders, and a further 18 being possible breeders. As such, a survey prior to the works is recommended. Additionally, any loss of nesting provision as a result of the works will be mitigated. Specifically, vegetation clearance is to be completed outside of breeding bird season. Various sized bird boxes would be integrated into the development. Key habitats are to be retained and enhanced.
- 7.5.6. The Tyrer Ecological Consultants bat activity report finds that there are habitats which have high likelihood for supporting bat commuting and foraging habitats. As such, measures are to be put in place to mitigate development impact on bat habitats. Specifically, the landscaping plan retains key habitat locations. Protective fencing and pollution control measures will be in place to reduce potential construction harm. A bat lighting strategy is proposed to mitigate operational harm. Finally, contributions will be made to offset unavoidable harm.
- 7.5.7. A Biodiversity Metric Assessment has been undertaken to inform the proposed development. The assessment demonstrates that Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) can be achieved through a combination of on-site habitat creation and enhancement measures, supplemented where necessary by off-site provision. The identification and delivery of any off-site compensation measures will be progressed through the planning application process. The Applicant is confident that, through the implementation of on-site and off-site biodiversity enhancements, the development will achieve the statutory requirement for a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 7.5.8. The proposal delivers enhancements in terms of ecology and therefore accords with policies G7 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and the NPPF.

7.6 TREES AND LANDSCAPING

- 7.6.1. An Arboricultural Assessment prepared by E3P presents the findings of the tree survey and assessment of the quality of the existing trees, based on their current condition and quality. The assessment includes impacts arising from the proposed development of the site on these trees.
- 7.6.2. The site survey identified a total of one individual tree graded Category B (trees of moderate value), four groups of trees and two hedgerows graded Category C (trees of low value) on and adjacent to the site.
- 7.6.3. The proposed development necessitates the removal of 1 group, part of 1 group and part of 1 hedge to in order to accommodate the proposals and facilitate the wider development. However, it is noted that all of these are of low value (category C).
- 7.6.4. Whilst the development involves the loss of trees, replanting is proposed which will result in a significant net gain of trees across the site.
- 7.6.5. The landscape strategy has been formulated specifically to strengthen the site boundary with additional tree planting and hedgerows. The strategy ensures that the proposals themselves will be well screened from the public realm. and as such visually contained within the site. The landscape strategy is considered appropriate in order to offset the minor impact of the proposals on the wider landscape.
- 7.6.6. In terms of assessing the proposals impact on the wider landscape, the application is supported by a LVIA prepared by Ascerta.
- 7.6.7. As set out earlier in this statement, the LVIA confirms that the overall impacts of the development are considered minor and that with the mitigation strategy the landscape can accommodate the development.
- 7.6.8. As a result of the above, the proposal delivers significant enhancements in terms of arboriculture landscaping and therefore accords with Core Strategy policies P2 and G6 and paragraph 130 of the NPPF.

7.7 ENERGY STRATEGY

- 7.7.1. An Energy Statement has been prepared by Crookes Walker Consulting to support this application. The statement sets out the proposed methodology for reducing carbon dioxide and the predicted numerical reduction.
- 7.7.2. It is highlighted that the proposed units, unit A and unit B, would deliver a 4.5% betterment of total annual CO2 over the figures set out within Part L of the Building Regulations.
- 7.7.3. This is achieved through multiple methods, including: high-performance insulation; airtight construction with a design air permeability of 3m3/hr/m2 @ 50Pa; solar control glazing; prioritising natural light; high performance building materials; Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP); no gas boilers or on-site combustion systems; Variable Refrigerant Flow (VRF) systems; Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery (MVHR) in offices; pipe and duct insulation; Photovoltaic Panels (PV); and use of LED lightning with daylight dimming and automated presence control.
- 7.7.4. Other sustainability measures include planting of native trees, support for future EV integration, future battery storage compatibility, and climate resilience through passive overheating controls.

- 7.7.5. As such, with the above measures in place, the report concludes that there is significant reduction of potential carbon emissions as a result of the development proposals. Both units are projected to achieve an EPC Rating of 'A', and should they be BREEAM assessed, they are likely to achieve 'Excellent' status.
- 7.7.6. The proposals therefore align with objectives 6, 10, 12, 15, and 17 of Rochdale's climate change and air quality objectives, Policy G2 of Rochdale Core Strategy, and Part L2A of the Building Regulations.

7.8 FLOODING AND DRAINAGE

FLOOD RISK

- 7.8.1. A Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) prepared by Ridge accompanies this application. It investigates the potential flood risk impacts of the proposed development and is considered proportionate to the degree of flood risk and to the scale, nature and location of the development.
- 7.8.2. The flood maps provided by the Environment Agency (EA) locate the site within Flood Zone 1, i.e. and defined as having an annual probability of fluvial flooding of less than 1 in 1000 in any year (<0.1%). As a requirement of the NPPF (2021) and accompanying National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG), the proposed development has to satisfy the requirements of the Sequential Test and where applicable the Exception Test.
- 7.8.3. As per the sequential test under the NPPF (2021), Flood Zone 1 is considered as having low probability flooding. The proposal is for a new Commercial Development, which in line with Table 2 is classified as 'Less Vulnerable'. In accordance with Table 3 (Flood Risk Vulnerability and Flood Zone 'Compatibility'), development proposals of this category within Flood Zone 1 are considered appropriate.
- 7.8.4. As the Sequential Test is passed, the Exception Test is not required.

DRAINAGE

- 7.8.5. A Drainage Strategy (also prepared by Ridge) accompanies this application. The strategy responds to the relevant policy and guidance and is based upon an assessment of the existing site connections, the FRA, and site investigations.
- 7.8.6. The outline surface water drainage strategy aims to outfall runoff to ordinary watercourse on the eastern side of the site. The SUDS assessment concludes that there is potential for rainwater harvesting, and suitability for standard permeable surfacing in private parking bays and implementation of swales, basins and ponds. There is also suitability for geocellular storage and large diameter pipes to contain 1,517m³-2,312m³ in a 100 year +45% event.
- 7.8.7. Infiltration methods are considered unsuitable due to the presence of cohesive underlying clay on the site and marshy ground to the east. Other unsuitable methods include green roofs which are architecturally limited, water butts which cannot be used with siphonic drainage, and surface water sewers since there are none existing in close proximity.
- 7.8.8. The existing greenfield runoff rates are as follows: 26.4 l/s per 1 year; 30.3 l/s per QBAR; 51.4 l/s per 30 year; and 63.1 l/s per 100 year. The post-development runoff rates are calculated to be 26.4 l/s per 1-100 year +45% CC. Therefore, the proposed development and mitigation measures are

deemed to result in a reduction in storm water flow rates and does not increase the risk of flooding to other adjacent properties and roads.

- 7.8.9. In regard to foul water drainage, package treatment works on-site are proposed which will treat and discharge to the ordinary watercourse to the east of the site. Overall, therefore, the proposed drainage methods exceed the statutory requirements and accords with policy G8 of the Core Strategy and paragraph 167 of the NPPF.

7.9 GROUND CONDITIONS

- 7.9.1. The application is accompanied by a Desk Study/Phase I Geo-environmental Risk Assessment and Coal Mining Risk Assessment prepared by Applied Geology. The desk study provides an overview of the potential hazardous substances or conditions on or the near the site whilst establishing the anticipated geological conditions.
- 7.9.2. The assessment sets out that there is potential for some contamination due to the presence of Made Ground associated with construction-derived materials. Identified pollutants are heavy metals, hydrocarbons, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and asbestos. Given the industrial/commercial use proposed and that there will be no residential use, and that the pathways of the contaminants to human health are mostly broken due to presence of hardstanding on the site, it is deemed that significant remedial action is not required. It has also been identified that there is risk from hazardous ground gases, though this is deemed to be low risk.
- 7.9.3. In regard to coal mining, it is identified that the site is located within a coal mining development high risk area. There are no recorded mines, mine gas incidents, and coal mining subsidence claims. However, there are probable unrecorded shallow workings. As such, the proposed development would implement reinforced foundations in order to minimise potential impacts from coal mining.
- 7.9.4. It is recommended that a further ground investigation is undertaken to confirm the models derived from the Phase 1 desk study. It should assess geotechnical soil parameters to permit foundation design, and assess shallow mining risk to determine developable area positions. Subject to further investigations, the development proposals are thereby deemed to accord with the requirements of Core Strategy policy G9.

7.10 HERITAGE

- 7.10.1. The site contains no statutory listed buildings or designated heritage assets, and is not within a conservation area. Within a 1km radius, only one Grade II listed building (Lower Whittle Farmhouse, NHLE: 1068502) and the Birch Village Conservation Area are identified, while three non-designated heritage assets (Higher Fields Farm, Broom Hill Farm, Stock Nook) are located within 500m.
- 7.10.2. The assessment concludes that the site is physically and visually divorced from Lower Whittle Farmhouse, Birch Village Conservation Area, and Broom Hill Farm, with no harmful impact on their significance. The site forms a limited part of the wider setting for Higher Fields Farm and Stock Nook, but the impact of the proposals is assessed as low and negligible respectively, with the immediate fields around these farmsteads remaining undeveloped.
- 7.10.3. The proposals therefore preserve the significance of all identified heritage assets, in accordance with NPPF Paragraphs 207, 210, and 216, Rochdale Core Strategy Policy P2, and Places for Everyone Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2. Any limited harm to the setting of non-designated assets is

outweighed by the public benefits of the scheme, and the assessment confirms that the development is consistent with the statutory development plan.

7.11 NOISE

- 7.11.1. A Noise Assessment prepared by e3p accompanies the submission. The noise report establishes the noise climate in the surrounding area and whether the proposed operations at the site, taken as a worst-case scenario, would give rise to any adverse impacts from a noise perspective.
- 7.11.2. The report provides a comprehensive overview of the proposals, surveying weekend and weekday, along with day and night surveys. It was found that the resulting noise would be below the British Standard requirements. As such, no noise mitigation measures are required, and operational and construction noise is deemed acceptable. The proposal is in full accordance with policy G9 of the Rochdale Core Strategy and the NPPF.

7.12 CRIME IMPACT STATEMENT

- 7.12.1. A Crime Impact Statement has been prepared by Adrian Murphy and is submitted as part of this application. Following review of the proposed works, the statement encourages the development and recommends the following security measures:
- Retain the existing security lodge and the security staff at the entrance to the business park;
 - Erect robust perimeter fencing;
 - Install security-rated external doors, roller shutters, window frames and laminate glazing when constructing the units;
 - Use access control systems to regulate movements into, and through, each unit, where appropriate;
 - A monitored intruder alarm and CCTV should be installed to each unit; and
 - Secure and weatherproof cycle stores should be provided.
- 7.12.2. Should the above measures be implemented, the proposed development is considered to accord with Paragraph 92 of the NPPF which highlights that development should create safe, inclusive and accessible places which promote health and well-being.

8 PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

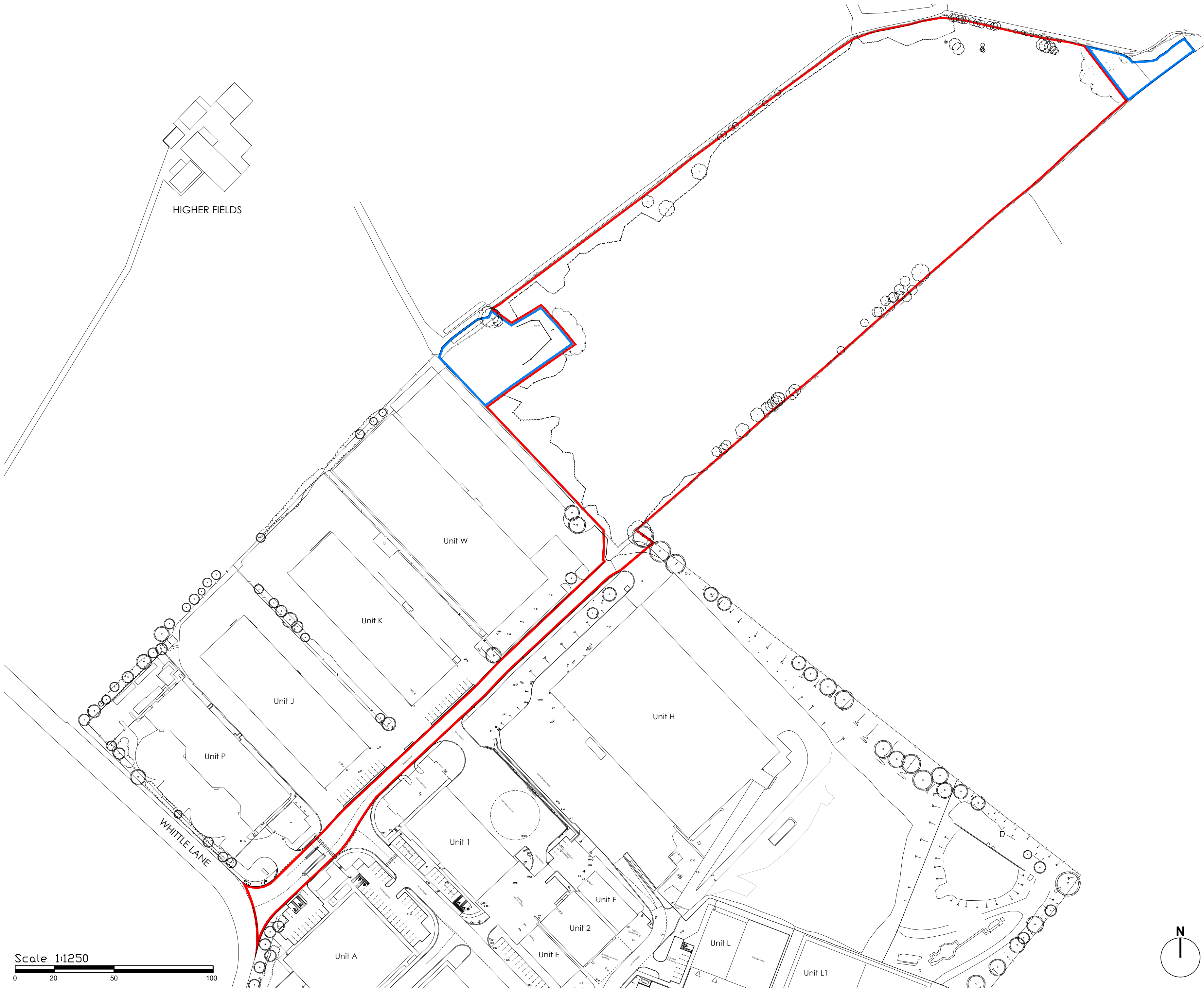
- 8.1.1. This planning application seeks outline planning permission for employment development comprising industrial and warehouse floorspace (Use Classes B2 and B8) together with ancillary class E office, with supporting loading bays, trailer bays, trailer park spaces, parking spaces, landscaping, infrastructure and associated works at land north of Birch Business Park, Heywood.
- 8.1.2. The units will offer modern industrial units within an allocated strategic site. The proposal will deliver jobs and local investment.
- 8.1.3. The site is designated for development under 'Policy JP Allocation 1.1 Heywood / Pilsworth (Northern Gateway)' within PfE. The allocation seeks to deliver a total of around 1,200,000 m² of industrial and warehousing space (with around 935,000 m² being delivered within the plan period).
- 8.1.4. The proposed development will meet a borough wide and local need for employment whilst assisting the Council and Greater Manchester in delivering a strategic employment allocation. It will create innovation, strengthen supply chains, and aligns with the SPD's ambition to attract advanced manufacturing investment within Atom Valley, contributing to Greater Manchester's economic competitiveness and inclusive growth.
- 8.1.5. The NPPF is focused on building a strong and competitive economy and supporting sustainable development.
- 8.1.6. As identified throughout this Statement and set out in detail in the Environmental Statement – Socio-Economics chapter, there are a number of significant benefits associated with the development including:
- Creation of temporary employment during the construction phase equivalent to circa 56 direct full time equivalent (FTE) construction workers being employed on a full-time basis for twelve months;
 - Full-time employment once operational equating to circa 201 and 380 direct full time jobs;
 - Additional expenditure in the local economy, equating to additional GVA of £5.6m in the construction phase and £7.6m to £13.8m annually once operational with a potential regional impact between £13.4m - £24.1m;
 - Promoting further investment within the Borough;
 - Assisting the Council in delivering strategic aspirations for the site and wider area;
 - Social benefits through significant job creation both during construction and once operational with a range of positions created. New employment would be accessible to a range of the local community including disadvantaged residents of the Borough; and
 - Environmental benefits such as new landscaping and tree planting
- 8.1.7. In addition to the above benefits, the application is supported by a suite of technical assessments including an Environmental Statement that clearly demonstrate that the proposed development is technically and environmentally acceptable in terms of design, highways impact, flood risk/drainage, ecological impact, air quality and noise.

- 8.1.8. The enclosed design and access statement and landscape strategy demonstrates that a “landscape-led” scheme has been progressed which results in an illustrative masterplan which includes significant green linkages throughout.
- 8.1.9. The plan demonstrates how the scheme can retain and enhance existing natural assets where possible, provide ecological benefits, and mitigates any potential landscape of visual effects.
- 8.1.10. The principle of development is acceptable and has long been established, and the extensive technical assessments demonstrate that the proposed development clearly constitutes sustainable development.
- 8.1.11. As such, the proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and, in line with paragraph 11 of the NPPF, should be approved without delay.

Appendix A

SITE LOCATION PLAN





HIGHER FIELDS

WHITTLE LANE

Scale 1:1250

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Hazard Identification		
Ref	Hazard	Date

- Planning Boundary
Area: 41,061sqm (10.15Acres)
- Ownership Boundary

P1	Planning Issue	AL	30.07.26	BB
Rev	Revision Details	Drawn	Date	Chck'd

Project No. 25017
Suitability S2 Suitable for Information
Status Planning

Client:
Yeagate

Project:
The Field, Birch Business Park

Sheet Name:
Location Plan

Drawing No. 25017-HFR- AV-XX-DR-A-9001
Drawn By AL
Created 30.07.26
Rev. P1
Scale 1:1250@A2

HORIZON

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Appendix B

PRE-APP RESPONSE



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Melanie Hale
Head of Planning Services

Mr Alec Drake
WSP
8 First Street
Manchester
M15 4RP

Number One Riverside, Smith Street,
Rochdale, OL16 1XU

Enquiries to: Nick Brookman
Web: www.rochdale.gov.uk
Email: nick.brookman@rochdale.gov.uk
Direct Line: 01706 925891
Reference: PREAPP/00118/25
Date: 24/06/2026

BY EMAIL ONLY

Dear Alec,

Reference No: PREAPP/00118/25
Proposal: The erection of two industrial warehouse units (B2/B8)
Location: Land North Of Birch Business Park, Whittle Lane, Heywood,
OL10 2SX

I write in reference to your request for pre-application planning advice for the erection of two industrial warehouse units (Use Classes B2/B8) on Land to the north of Birch Business Park, Whittle Lane, Heywood, OL10 2SX.

Please note that the advice detailed below will firstly address the matters we discussed during our Pre Application meeting on Wednesday 7th January 2026 at 13:30pm and as referred to below:

- Approach to EIA development;
- Approach to design and accordance with the Northern Gateway Development Framework (NGDF);
- Approach to LVIA Viewpoints;
- Approach to BNG mitigation; and
- Proposed validation list.

This advice will then set out a summary site description and all other material planning considerations appropriate to this development before making a conclusion as to the acceptability of the proposal. This advice will also make recommendations for future consideration where and if necessary.

Approach to EIA Development

As set out in my email dated Thursday 8th January 2026, Officers broadly agree with the approach to EIA Development that you have suggested but we think there are a couple of matters for you to first review and a point that we need to clarify with our own legal team on process/terminology.



We agree that given the scale of the development in isolation, a proportionate approach is needed in this instance. We don't have any significant concerns on your proposed approach to the topics raised but we would advise you to ensure that you have reviewed and can present any impacts outside of the EIA if appropriate on heritage for example (such as the impact on Higher Fields Farm which is noted in the NG ES as I previously mentioned).

You will also need to review the extent of the NG ES with respect of the baseline conditions and cumulative effects and it needs to be noted that the NG ES sets out any limitations on baseline surveys for land outside of the application boundary so you / your client will need to satisfy yourselves whether there are any elements of the assessment that require further information specific to your site. This would also include consideration of any data which could be out of time for valid use at the point of a future submission.

We cannot confirm your clients ability to use any baseline information gathered by another party so again you would need to ensure the lawful use of any data used in preparation of any application. We would also note the NG outline application has not yet been approved and thus the ES is still subject to confirmation that the findings of it are fully accepted.

Nevertheless, we agree with the general approach that the scope of the document would be more akin to an Addendum although as touched on above, as Officers we would need to review this terminology and procedurally with legal as the application would not be a 'subsequent application' or strictly comprise additional information requested through article 25 of the regs. This is more a point of how the submission should be named and set out but we will review this further and discuss this with you prior to any submission.

Approach to Design and Accordance with the NGDF

Any proposed development should ensure the development follows the framework principles. We previously discussed the NGDF and it's emphasis on providing advanced manufacturing which is referred to throughout the framework but in the opinion of Planning Officers this would fall under the generic lawful B2/B8 use classes.

The NGDF mentions under paragraph 6.20 that the estimated 1,200,000 sqm of employment floorspace to be provided across the wider JPA 1.1 allocation, should attract a variety of growing and emerging business sectors including (but not limited to) advanced manufacturing, logistics, industrial, data centres, storage and distribution.

Whilst the end users / future occupiers have not yet been lined up, it is considered that the proposal for two warehouse units under Use Classes B2/B8 would comply with the requirements of the allocation.

We would also draw your attention to the requirements of the SPD and the PpE policy in regard to ensuring that developments are brought forward in a cohesive and comprehensive manner. Whilst this site may be capable of being brought forward independently, consideration of how the proposal fits within the wider allocation should be demonstrated in the submission documents. This includes consideration as to how the proposal would comply with the need for a masterplanned development informed by a design code. The current application 25/00418/OUT is supported by a design code which remains subject to approval by the LPAs however any proposals should demonstrate how they are considering design cohesively with other proposals being promoted within the allocation.



Approach to LVIA Viewpoints

Owing to the benefit of our on-site meeting on the 7th January 2026 at 10am and a review of the submitted proposed 2.5km study area, Planning Officers agree that the suggested viewpoint locations are appropriate and we would recommend that all viewpoints are considered.

Approach to BNG Mitigation

The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) have commented that whilst new guidance is expected imminently, it is unlikely that this site will be eligible for any new or amended exemptions from providing 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The supporting statement sets out that 10% net gain cannot be achieved on site. Whilst it is acknowledged that the site does not comprise a more sensitive location within the allocation, opportunities must still be maximized for onsite BNG provision with offsite proposals being robustly justified in the context of national guidance on BNG delivery alongside the policies and guidance within PfE and the Development Framework SPD. We would also emphasise that the GMEU have noted that there is an element of uncertainty on what the baseline habitat of the site is given the land looks to have been subject to change over recent years from bare ground and grassland. We would advise that whatever baseline score is determined upon submission of the application, this will need to be evidenced and justified accordingly.

In terms of providing BNG mitigation the application site and proposed development as a whole should look to be landscape led and look to maximise all opportunities available to provide BNG on site where possible. Where any offsite BNG proposals are robustly justified, this should continue to follow the mitigation hierarchy in exploring opportunities as close to the application site as possible.

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

PfE Policy JP-G8 seeks to deliver a net enhancement of biodiversity resources through a collective of measures which are broadly aligned with the approach to BNG outlined within the Environment Act (2021), the NPPF and supporting guidance documents. The provisions of the Environment Act in respect of BNG are now a statutory requirement for planning applications and so the proposed development should achieve net gains for biodiversity via species enhancement as guided by the NPPF (paragraphs 187d and 192b) to achieve demonstrable net gain for biodiversity.

When determining planning applications paragraph 193 of the NPPF sets out that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused. Opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should also be integrated as part of their design.

As of 2nd April 2024, BNG of 10% for minor planning applications is mandatory for development in England under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act



1990.

Accordingly, if this application does not qualify for any exemptions, the scheme will be required to achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity units and must be accompanied by the minimum information requirements set out in Article 7 as follows:

- A statement as to whether the applicant believes that if permission is granted, it would be subject to the BNG condition;
- The pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application (or an earlier date) including the completed metric calculation tool used showing the calculations, the publication date and version of the biodiversity metric used to calculate that value;
- Where the applicant wishes to use an earlier date, the proposed earlier date and the reasons for proposing that date;
- A statement confirming whether the biodiversity value of the onsite habitat is lower on the date of application (or an earlier date) because of the carrying on of activities ('degradation') in which case the value is to be taken as immediately before the carrying on of the activities, and if degradation has taken place supporting evidence of this;
- A description of any irreplaceable habitat (as set out in column 1 of the Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations [2024]) on the land to which the application relates, that exists on the date of application, (or an earlier date); and
- A plan, drawn to an identified scale which must show the direction of North, showing onsite habitat existing on the date of application (or and earlier date), including any irreplaceable habitat.

If this information has not been provided, the application will not be validated. However the following additional information is required before the application can be determined and so to avoid delays, you are strongly advised to provide the following at the time of submission:

- A completed biodiversity excel metric must be submitted including the baseline and predicted post development biodiversity value of the site
- A BNG statement or draft biodiversity gain plan that provides adequate information for the LPA to be satisfied that a 10% net gain in biodiversity units is achievable, either on or off-site. It must demonstrate compliance with the mitigation hierarchy, whether the trading summary is likely to be met; any irreplaceable habitat impacts and proposed mitigation; whether additional on-site habitat measures are being investigated (for e.g. where soil sampling is being undertaken to establish the value of grassland which can be created in a landscaped area of a site); whether off-site compensation is being sought (including proposed use of statutory credits) and any correspondence to date.
- Raw baseline habitat data.
- Pre and post development habitat maps.

For more advice please refer to the guidance provided by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority:

[Biodiversity Net Gain in Greater Manchester - Greater Manchester Combined Authority](#)

In addition paragraph 136 of the NPPF states that trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. As referred to above, Core Strategy Policy G7 requires that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and Core



Strategy Policy G6 requires any tree loss that is unavoidable should be compensated for on a 2:1 basis.

Officers have consulted the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit on this pre-application and they have raised the following comments:

“The allocated site is best described as vacant and derelict land having undergone significant disturbance over the last 20 years, with google earth indicating regular earthworks.

Ecological Assessment Requirements

The pre-application supporting information notes that ecological surveys including great crested newts and breeding bird surveys have already occurred. Given the known presence of great crested newt in a pond within 250m of the site, I agree that the GCN surveys are required. Dependent on when the surveys were carried out, they may still be valid, best practice being that such surveys are valid for 18 months or more for most species. As part of any planning application I would therefore recommend:

- *A valid preliminary ecological appraisal,*
- *Great crested newt surveys of ponds within 250m of the site*
- *Any other species surveys such as breeding birds recommended by the PEA.*

Biodiversity Net Gain

The development will very likely be subject to mandatory BNG. Whilst new guidance is expected imminently, it is unlikely that this site will be eligible for any new or amended exemptions. It is not clear that 10% net gain will be achievable on-site, given the percentage of the site proposed for development, but there is also an element of uncertainty on what the baseline habitat is, given it has continuously changed over recent years between bare ground, grassland and successional habitats. Whatever baseline is proposed will need to be evidenced and explained.

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment

Whilst BNG will resolve issues relating to on-site habitat loss, it does not necessarily address negative effects on wildlife or indirect effects to off-site habitats, such as a possibly culverted watercourse along the northern boundary. Mitigation for loss of opportunities for nesting birds, great crested newts etc should be provided along with information on surface water drainage to the nearby watercourse.

Proposed Validation Checklist

Planning Officers agree with the proposed Validation checklist you have put forward in your supporting letter and a list of documents is provided at the end of this letter for reference.

Officers note that the list you have put forward also refers to heritage input (if required). On this matter the Council would highlight that Higher Fields Farm to the north west of the application site is identified as being a Non-Designated Heritage Asset (NDHA) but this is located approximately 200m. However, Officers note that as part of the wider PfE Allocation, it appears that this is due to be demolished according to the Environmental Statement provided with the outline application for the wider allocation under application 25/00418/OUT.



Proposed Development

Advice is sought on the construction of two industrial warehouse units (B2/B8) use to the north east of the exiting Birch Business Park with the intention of subsequently submitting an outline planning application.

The supporting letter with the pre-application states that the proposed warehouse units will be supported by parking spaces and landscaping.

The proposed units are divided up into Unit A and Unit B.

Unit A

Unit A is located to the north east of the business park site. Unit A includes 65 car parking spaces. This unit would measure up to around 60.6m by 99.5m with a ridge height of up to 20 metres. Unit A will have a total gross internal floorspace of 6,452 sqm including first floor office.

Unit B

Unit B is located to the north east of the business park site. Unit B includes 56 car parking spaces. This unit would measure 60m by 90.2m with a ridge height of up to 20 metres. Unit B will have a total gross internal floorspace of 5,789 sqm including first floor office.

Given that the intention is to initially only come forward in outline with access and all other matters to be reserved, elevational treatments have not yet been designed but the intention is to ensure that the application demonstrates a robust high quality design utilising a contrasting colour palette to break down the elevations and soften the appearance of the buildings can be achieved.

As will be required, the supporting letter confirms that the design will have regard to the Northern Gateway Development Framework (NGDF).

Development Plan

The Development Plan for Rochdale consists of the Rochdale Core Strategy (CS), adopted 2016, and saved Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies. Other material considerations include, amongst other things, Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), Development Plan Documents (DPDs), the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) and Places for Everyone (PfE), in addition to the National Design Guide and the Northern Gate Development Framework (NGDF).

Background and Site

The application site is fairly rectangular in shape and it relates to a vacant area of land to the north east of Birch Business Park which is accessed via Whittle Lane / Moss Hall Road to the west.

The site is located in close proximity to the M66 and M62 Motorways which connects the immediate area with the M60 Motorway which is Manchester's orbital motorway and the M62 linking Liverpool to Leeds with subsequent connections to the M6 and M1 Motorway's.



The site currently comprises undeveloped land which appears to have been subject to vegetation clearance in the recent past.

The Public Right of Way HEY FP74 travels along (but outside of) the northern boundary of the site.

The site features a pond in the north west corner of the site which lies outside the red edge application boundary.

The site lies immediately to the west of the South Heywood Masterplan Area but the site now forms part of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan as an allocated site known as JPA 1.1 Northern Gateway.

Relevant Planning History

25/00418/OUT - Application for outline planning permission (all matters reserved) for a national-scale employment development, comprising Storage & Distribution (Use Class B8) and Industrial (Use Classes B2, E(g)(ii) and E (g)(iii)) uses (including, but not limited to, Logistics, Manufacturing Processes and Data Centres), with supporting ancillary uses including Hotel (Use Class C1), Commercial, Business & Service (Uses Class E (a-g)), Education (Use Class F1(a)), Local Community (Use Class F2(a-c)) uses, Sui Generis uses (in accordance with the Uses Schedule), and associated demolition works, landscaping, drainage, ecological enhancements, highway works, cycleway and footpath linkages and other ancillary infrastructure – Pending Consideration.

24/01039/SCO – Environmental Impact Assessment scoping opinion for the proposed Northern Gateway Allocation Site JPA 1.1.

16/01399/HYBR - Part full/part outline planning application for the development of land at South Heywood, including the demolition of a number of existing on-site buildings and structures. Full consent sought for the construction of a new link road between Junction 19 of the M62 and Pilsworth Road, the widening of part of Pilsworth Road, together with associated junction improvements, landscaping, lighting and other works including the importation of material and engineering works in order to construct the link road. Outline consent (with all matters reserved for future approval except access) sought for a major mixed-use development comprising supporting residential uses comprising up to 1000 dwellings (Class C3); employment uses (Classes B2/B8) comprising up to 135,460m2 Gross Internal Area(GIA); a new primary school (Class D1); Class A1/A2/A3/A5 uses comprising up to 2500m2 GIA which includes no more than 499m2 of A1 uses; together with associated landscaping, open space and sports pitches, drainage, ecological enhancements, cycleway and footpath linkages, infrastructure and other works ancillary thereto. (Application accompanied by an Environmental Statement) – Approved but relates to the South Heywood Masterplan Area.

Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

This application should look to deliver a high-quality sustainable development and as such, the proposal should be designed in accordance with the relevant adopted Rochdale Core Strategy Policies, Places for Everyone Policies, the NGDF and the NPPF.



Paragraph 85 of the NPPF requires that ‘significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development’.

The proposed application site is sited within the Northern Gateway allocated under PfE JPA 1.1. This proposal would contribute to the delivery of this allocation and contribute to the proposed 1,200,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing space across the wider allocation.

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

CS Policy E2 also sets out that the Council will ensure a sufficient supply of suitable land, buildings and infrastructure in the right places to support the creation and retention of successful businesses and increase the number and quality of jobs to create a more prosperous lower carbon economy.

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF sets out that *‘Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development’*.

The site is located immediately adjacent to an existing industrial/commercial area referred to as Birch Business Park where there is a mixture of larger and smaller industrial units in close proximity. Given the surrounding land uses and land allocation, subject to an assessment of other development management requirements, it is considered that the principle of development for an industrial use is acceptable and in accordance with the requirements of saved UDP Policy EC/2, Policy E2 of the Core Strategy and the requirements of PfE and the land allocation JPA 1.1 as well as the NGDF.

Design

Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that *“the creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve”*. Paragraph 135 goes on to state that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change.

Additionally, paragraph 139 sets out that development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design.

CS Policy P1 sets out that high quality design will be required in all new developments and CS Policy C3 requires new development to adhere to high standards of design, respecting context (scale, density, massing, height, layout). CS Policy DM1 states that all development proposals should be of a high quality design and take the opportunity to enhance the quality of the area.



Appearance

It is understood that no elevations have been designed at this stage but Planning Officers would expect the appearance and design of both units to echo a similar materials palette to the wider Birch Business Park and to accord with the design principles of the NGDF.

Layout

The proposed principal access to the site is from the existing business park and the proposed development is largely aligned parallel to the internal access road.

Staff and visitor car parking including accessible, electric vehicle, cycle and motorcycle spaces have been positioned adjacent to both units.

The overall layout comprising of access arrangements, parking, servicing and landscaping appears to be laid out appropriately for a development of this nature.

Landscaping Design

It is important to note at this stage that paragraph 136 confirms that *“trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible”*.

Owing to the benefit of a site visit, it is clear that there are several trees either within or along the site boundaries that do provide a limited level of amenity value to the area. They also provide a screening effect, albeit very restricted given the topography of the land. Nevertheless, linking in with CS Policy G6 and Biodiversity Net Gain which is discussed in more detail below, new development should avoid the loss of existing green space or features such as trees and existing green infrastructure should be incorporated into any proposed development scheme wherever possible.

Any proposed layout should therefore avoid the loss of green infrastructure and all developments should incorporate a strong landscaping scheme with street trees to add to a sense of high quality design and amenity value to the immediate area. All forms of soft landscaping must be maximised and integrated effectively across the application site and not be proposed with a contrived appearance. Officers need to be satisfied in any future submission that all proposed landscaping is purposely integrated into the proposed development.

Summary

A full list is included at the end of this letter but any future application would need to be accompanied by proposed elevations drawings, sections drawings, existing and proposed site plans, full details of materials and other architectural details, and hard and soft landscaping details. The proposal would need to satisfy the overarching aims and objectives set out in local and national design guidance in addition to Policies P1 and P3 and DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan, the NGDF and the National Planning Policy Framework.



Whilst not necessary for validation, indicative 3D visuals / models of the proposed site can significantly help provide context for a proposed development.

Residential Amenity, Noise and Pollution

The Council's Environmental Health team were consulted as part of this pre-application, but their comments remain outstanding. Nevertheless, Planning Officers note that the site is located immediately adjacent to an existing well-established business park and there are no residential properties within close proximity of the site.

However, Higher Fields Farm is located approximately 200m away to the north west and whilst heritage impacts relating to impacts on setting and character, may not be directly affected, noise can travel long distances.

Environmental Health would be consulted on any future full planning application but Planning Officers do not consider that Environmental Health Officers would have any objection in principle given the existing arrangements on the wider Birch Business Park. However, it is expected that given the scale of the development proposed, a Noise Impact Assessment must be submitted to ascertain the impact (if any) that the development would have on potential sensitive receptors and the surrounding environment.

Transport and Highways

Paragraph 115 of the NPPF states 'development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.' Paragraph 116 of the NPPF adds that applications for developments should:

- create places that are safe, secure and attractive – which minimise the scope for conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, avoid unnecessary street clutter, and respond to local character and design standards;
- allow for the efficient delivery of goods, and access by service and emergency vehicles; and
- be designed to enable charging of plug-in and other ultra-low emission vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

Policy DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy sets out the general development requirements and establishes that proposals should not adversely impact on highway safety. Additionally, it requires all development to provide satisfactory vehicular access with adequate parking and manoeuvring arrangements provided. Policy T2 of the adopted Core Strategy seeks to improve accessibility by locating development where good access to public transport is available or can be provided and in all circumstances, prioritises the safety, accessibility and amenity of those who live or have business in the area. Additionally,

Policy JP-C7 of the PfE, states that we will support development that makes appropriate provision for deliveries and servicing in terms of road safety, traffic congestion and environmental impacts, in accordance with Policy JP-C8.

Policy T2 of the Core Strategy requires developments to comply with the parking standards set out in Appendix 5 of the adopted Core strategy.

The Public Right of Way HEY FP74 travels along (but outside of) the northern



boundary of the site but it would not appear to be directly affected by the development. The route is therefore to be maintained in its current location and the developer is reminded that the route of the footpath must not be obstructed by vehicles, machinery or materials.

Of significant relevance to this proposal is the identification of infrastructure requirements within Appendix D of PfE and within the Development Framework SPD and the accompanying draft Infrastructure Phasing and Delivery Strategy. The successful delivery of the full allocation will require very significant investment in strategic infrastructure with regards to highways, active travel, and public transport. This infrastructure will be delivered through a combination of forward funded public investment alongside direct delivery by applicants and or contributions towards infrastructure benefitting the allocation and all of the end users within. Whilst the exact infrastructure requirements are the subject of ongoing work between the LPAs and key stakeholders such as TfGM and National Highways, any proposals being brought forward will be expected to make a commensurate contribution towards the delivery of this infrastructure.

The Council's Highways Engineers have been consulted as part of this pre-application and they have set out that a Transport Assessment should be submitted and the traffic generation associated with usage will need to be considered with junctions in the proximity being fully assessed for capacity.

The Transport Assessment should also consider public transport options and a swept path analysis of HGV's.

Highways have no objection to the proposal in principle subject to the submission of a comprehensive Transport Assessment.

Drainage and Flood Risk

The site is located within Flood Zone 1, having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding but the location of the proposed site access is subject to a high chance of surface water flooding. The site is also located within the Heywood Critical Drainage Area. For this reason, a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy should be submitted in order to demonstrate compliance with Policy JP-S4 (Flood Risk and the Water Environment) of PfE which expects developments to manage surface water runoff through sustainable drainage systems and development to achieve greenfield run-off rates unless it is demonstrated to be impracticable.

Land Contamination

CS Policy G9 requires that any risks associated with contaminated land are identified and addressed prior to development. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the local environment by preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability, and remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

The Environmental Health (ground contamination) officer was consulted on this pre-application and they have commented that Historic Ordnance Survey maps indicate the site was open space. However, the site was adjacent to, or part of, an old RAF air base in WWII which was used by the MOD after WWII. This facility is not shown on any Ordnance Survey maps although it is, for example, shown on old Soviet maps.



Any future planning application should be accompanied by the submission of a Phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment to assess the actual and/or potential contamination risks at the site.

Energy

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

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

Places for Everyone Policy JP-S2 sets out expectations for developments to minimise carbon emissions, following the energy hierarchy, and incorporating renewable energy and EV charging. JP-S2 has replaced existing policies within the Rochdale Core Strategy which related to these considerations. In accordance with Policy JP-S2, non-residential developments, there is an expectation for new development to achieve at least BREEAM excellent standard (or equivalent) for the 'Ene 01 – reduction of energy use and carbon emissions' category rising to 'BREEAM outstanding' equivalent for ENE 01 from 2028.

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

- Be carbon neutral by 2038
- Hold cumulative carbon dioxide emissions to without the carbon budget
- Initiate a programme of mitigation to reduce emissions including by:
 - Significantly upscaling solar photovoltaic energy;
 - Reducing heat demand in homes;
 - Moving away from carbon intensive gas as the primary source of heat;
 - Reducing heating and cooling demand for public and commercial buildings;
 - Increasing biofuel use;
 - Enable sustainable choices for travel and decarbonise transport;
 - Significantly upscaling building retrofit; and
 - Increase the delivery of nature-based solutions and biodiversity net gain.

Any future application should be accompanied by an Energy and Sustainability Statement and any scheme should be design in accordance with current policy objectives and in the interest of encouraging a transition to a low carbon emission and energy network in accordance with CS Policies G1 and G2 and PfE Policy JP-S2.

Other Matters

Falling within the JPA 1.1 allocation site, any proposals will also need to consider other infrastructure requirements or contributions required in line with PfE and the site specific IPDS. This includes potential contributions, financial or otherwise, towards Green Belt Compensation Measures, Carbon Offsetting, Holcroft Moss SPD, as well as social value related to employment and skills opportunities. The extent of any such



contributions sought will be dependent on the final form of the proposals and accounting for any direct provision of infrastructure by the development proposals.

Concluding Comments

The proposed application site is sited within the Northern Gateway allocated under PfE JPA 1.1. This proposal would contribute to the delivery of this allocation and contribute to the proposed 1,200,000 sqm of industrial and warehousing space across the wider allocation.

If designed in accordance with the aforementioned planning policies and guidance, any future planning application would deliver a high-quality sustainable development in an appropriate location.

Given the surrounding land uses and land allocation it is considered that the principle of development for an industrial use on this site is acceptable and in accordance with the requirements of PfE and it's associated land allocation referenced JPA 1.1.

The Council has given a detailed view on the proposal at this stage based on the submitted information. Should you wish to submit a planning application; details of submission requirements are listed below.

Validation Requirements

The following reports would be required to accompany a planning application. The Council has adopted a Local Validation List which sets out the expectations of what supporting information should be submitted with a planning application. In respect of the proposed development, the following supporting information should be provided, at a minimum:

- Application form;
- Covering Letter;
- Planning Statement (Incorporating SCI)
- Location Plan to scale 1:1250 showing the direction of north, with the application site clearly edged in red;
- Topographical Survey;
- Existing and Proposed site plans to scale 1:200/1:500;
- Proposed Elevations in full to scale 1:100/1:50;
- Proposed Floor Plans in full to scale 1:100/1:50;
- Proposed Roof Plans;
- Proposed Site Sections;
- Proposed Boundary Treatment Elevations;
- Design and Access Statement;
- Soft and Hard Landscaping Proposals;
- Biodiversity Net Gain Statement/justification;
- Biodiversity Metric;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and accompanying surveys (See the GMEU comments above);
- Drainage Strategy;
- Flood Risk Assessment
- Transport Assessment;



- Travel Plan;
- Phase 1 Risk Assessment;
- Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment;
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment;
- Energy Statement;
- Noise Impact Assessment;
- Crime Impact Statement;
- Lighting Assessment.

Please note that any advice provided above is an informal opinion only and is made without prejudice to any formal determination which may be given in the event of an application being submitted. In particular, it does not constitute a formal decision of the Council with regard to any future planning applications, which will be subject to wider consultation and neighbourhood publicity, including with ward councillors, and provides no guarantee of a future decision.

Making an Application

Should you still wish to progress to submitting a formal application for planning permission, you can apply using the Planning Portal's online application service at: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/>.

Alternatively, you can complete an application form which can be found on the Council's website at <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/planning-and-building/apply-for-planning-permission/planning-permission---home/application-forms-and-guidance>

Please take care to include all of the required information as described in the validation checklist and as listed above: <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/pdf/2020-10-20-local-list-planning-v2.pdf>.

Please note that any representations received from neighbours or members of the public which raise material planning considerations will be taken into consideration by the Planning Officer in the determination of the application.

I hope this is of assistance.

Yours Sincerely,

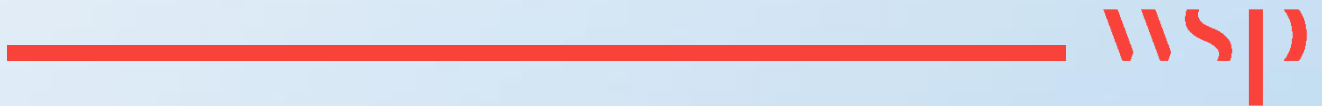
Nick Brookman

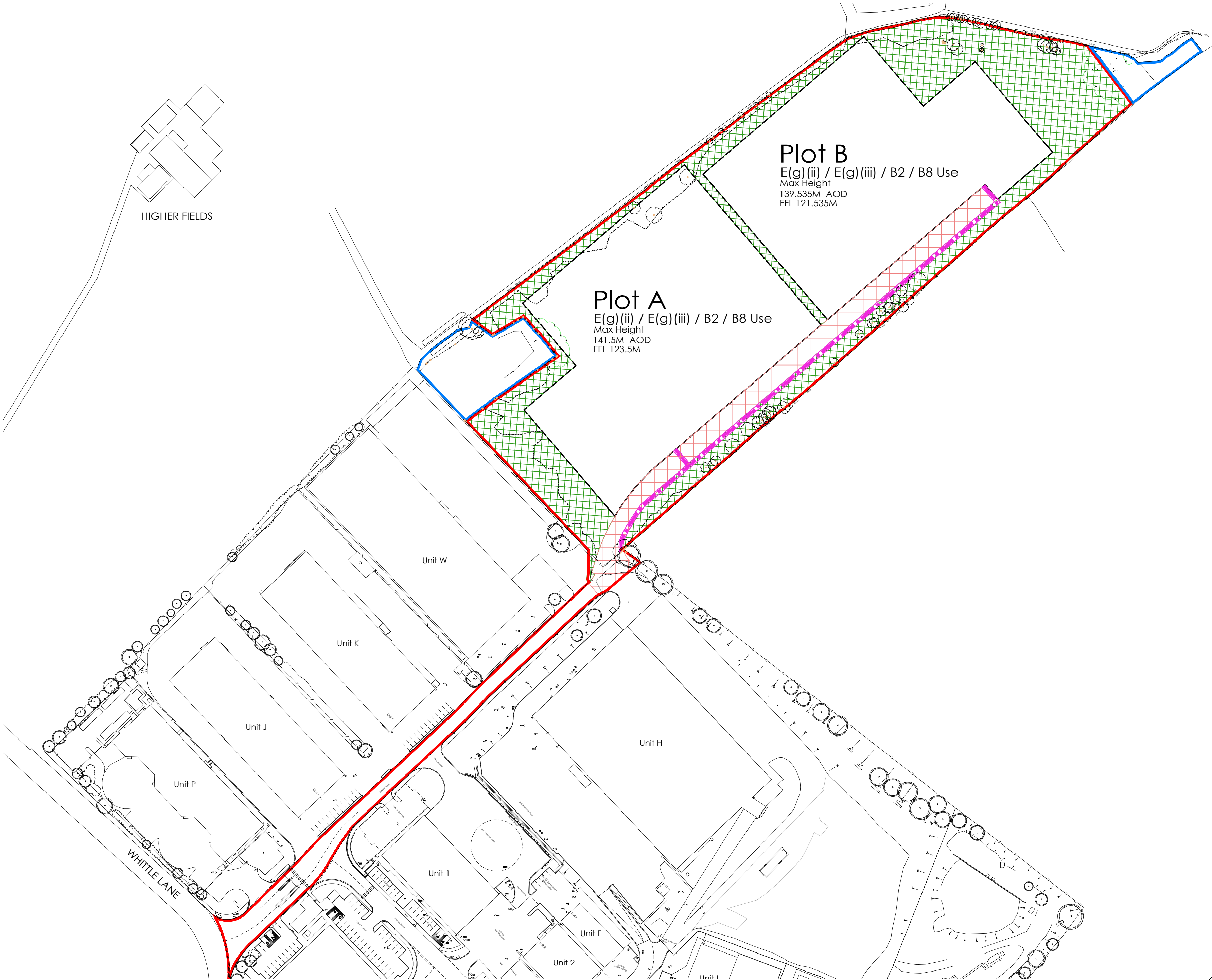
Nick Brookman
Senior Planning Officer



Appendix C

PROPOSED SITE PLAN





HIGHER FIELDS

Plot B
E(g)(ii) / E(g)(iii) / B2 / B8 Use
Max Height
139.535M AOD
FFL 121.535M

Plot A
E(g)(ii) / E(g)(iii) / B2 / B8 Use
Max Height
141.5M AOD
FFL 123.5M

Unit W

Unit K

Unit J

Unit P

Unit H

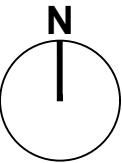
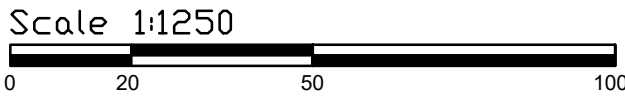
Unit 1

Unit F

Unit 2

Unit I

WHITTLE LANE



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Hazard Identification		
Ref	Hazard	Date

- Planning Boundary
Area: 41,061sqm (10.15Acres)
- Ownership Boundary
- UTILITIES CORRIDORS AND EASEMENTS
- Access + Circulation
- Green infrastructure to include retained habitat, and proposed woodland planting, scrub planting and species-rich grassland.

P1 Planning Issue	AL 30.07.26 BB
Rev Revision Details	Drawn Date Chk'd

Project No. 25017
Suitability S2 Suitable for Information
Status Planning

Client:
Yeagate

Project:
The Field, Birch Business Park

Sheet Name:
PARAMETERS

Drawing No. 25017-HFR- AV-XX-DR-A-9008 P1
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