

Officer Report

Case Reference: 25/01018/FUL
Location: Land At Waterfold Lane Heap Bridge Bury BL9 7JY
Proposal: Residential development of a 100% affordable housing scheme comprising of 6 apartments and 18 dwellinghouses, with access, landscaping, drainage and other associated works
Recommendation: Refuse
Officer: Nick Brookman

SITE

The application site is in the Green Belt located toward the southern end of Waterfold Lane which is located immediately to the east of the M66 motorway and the southbound carriageway at junction 2.

Waterfold Lane branches off from Bury New Road which is the A58 connecting Bolton, to Bury and Heywood and Rochdale.

The application site is bound to the north by a group of trees and the River Roch, Waterfold Lane to the east and south, and the M66 motorway and a belt of trees to the west. Beyond that is Heap Bridge Interchange to the north serving several junctions for Bury, Heywood, and the motorway network. Agricultural fields span out to the east and the south of the application site and on the other side of the M66 motorway to the west is Waterfold Business Park which contains the Village Hotel, Waterfold Arms Farmhouse Inn and several other industrial and office unit of varying sizes and massing.

There are terraced and semi-detached residential dwellings along the east side of Waterfold Lane as you approach the application site.

The application site not located within a Conservation Area nor are there any local or statutory listed assets within or adjacent to the site. The majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1 save for the bank of the River Roch which is located within Flood Zone 3.

It is believed that the site was formerly occupied by Water Fold Mill which was demolished to facilitate the construction of the M66 Motorway.

PROPOSAL

Planning permission was originally sought for the construction of 24 apartments (12 x 1 bed and 12 x 2 bed) and 6 x 3 bed terraced houses with accompanying off street parking, landscaping and amenity spaces.

Following an initial round of consultation, owing to a number of comments made and a change in the RP working with the applicant, the scheme was revised and the current proposal seeks planning permission for the construction of 18 x 3 bed terraced dwellings and 6 x 1 bed apartment.

The proposed layout integrates the proposed car parking to the west of the site with the residential element being positioned centrally and to the east of the application site. A secondary car park facilitating the smaller block is located to the far east of the site. The 2 blocks of the development are back-to-back with the proposed apartments adjoining the larger terraced row and being positioned at the southern end.

All dwellings comply or exceed Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) and in relation to Part M compliance, almost all dwellings are to M4(2) standards, however apartments on the first floor are not fully compliant as no lift is provided for access.

The proposed development also provides 3 M4(3) bed units.

The proposed building material palette comprises of buff brick, and fibre cement cladding with grey concrete roof tiles.

Waterfold Lane is currently adopted up to 79 Waterfold Lane, before narrowing around the curve of the River Roch and widening back out adjacent to the site. As part of the proposed development, Waterfold Lane would be widened, with a footpath provided to the west of the road from the site access to 61 Waterfold Lane, where the existing footpath to the east of the lane finishes.

The scheme includes some small provision of soft landscaping and amenity spaces including a short pedestrian route adjacent to the river.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – August 2026

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

National Design Guide

National Model Design Code

Building for a Healthy Life Toolkit

Local

Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (CS):

SP2	The Spatial Strategy for the borough
SD1	Delivering sustainable development
DM1	General development requirements
DM2	Delivering planning contributions and infrastructure
SO2	Creating successful and healthy communities
C1	Delivering the right amount of housing in the right places
C3	Delivering the right type of housing
C4	Providing affordable homes
C6	Improving health and well being
SO3	Improving design, image and quality of place
P1	Improving image
P3	Improving design of new development
SO4	Promoting a greener environment
G1	Tackling and adapting to climate change
G2	Energy and new development
G6	Enhancing green infrastructure
G7	Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity
G8	Managing water resources and flood risk
G9	Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability
SO5	Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport
T1	Delivering sustainable transport
T2	Improving accessibility

Saved Policies of the Rochdale Unitary Development Plan (UDP):

G/D/2	Green Belt
EM/7	Development and Flood Risk
EM/8	Protection of Surface and Ground Water

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE)

The Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan was adopted and became part of the statutory development plan for each of the 9 authorities covered by the plan on 21st March 2024. The following policies are relevant:

Sustainable and Resilient Places

- JP-S1 Sustainable Development
- JP-S2 Carbon and Energy
- JP-S3 Heat and Energy Networks
- JP-S4 Flood Risk and the Water Environment

Places for Homes

- JP-H1 Scale, Distribution and Phasing of New Housing Development
- JP-H2 Affordability of New Housing
- JP-H3 Type, Size and Design of New Housing
- JP-H4 Density of New Housing

Greener Places

- JP-G7 Trees and Woodland
- JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- JP-G9 The Green Belt

Places for People

- JP-P1 Sustainable Places

Connected Places

- JP-C1 An Integrated Network

JP-C2 Digital Connectivity

JP-C5 Streets for All

JP-C6 Walking and Cycling

JP-C8 Transport Requirements of New Development

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD):

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

RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

PREAPP/00051/23 – Residential Development – Advice given 4th April 2024.

22/01085/OUT – Outline application (including access, layout and scale) for 2 no three storey apartment blocks comprising total of 36 units – Refused 8th December 2022.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Highways and Engineering

Highways have commented that their main concerns relate to the visibility along the single carriageway section becoming overgrown and they would require a landscaping plan to show how this would be prevented.

Highways have also set out that ideally, 150% parking provision should be made available.

Highways therefore deferred their overall recommendation for this application to give the applicant the opportunity to identify more onsite parking and details of landscaping along the single carriageway section of the access.

The applicant's response to the above is considered below in more detail.

Environmental Health (Noise)

No objection subject to condition.

Environmental Health (Air)

No objection subject to condition.

Tree Officer

No comments received.

United Utilities

United Utilities have set out that following their review of the revised drawings, and given the proximity of the proposed development, including the highway improvement works and construction of a new retaining wall to the existing embankment, to United Utilities' assets and apparatus, their position is that they must object to the proposed scheme.

Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)

Objection

The LLFA have set out that whilst a previous LLFA review considered the proposals to be acceptable in principle, the current layout is considered to be a retrograde approach from a sustainable drainage perspective.

Previous LLFA comments requested further investigation of infiltration potential. There is no evidence that this has been undertaken and remains outstanding. It is noted that the sieve analysis results appear to support the view that soils are predominantly sands, gravels and cobbles which may offer infiltration potential.

The inclusion of a geocellular tank must be justified against the SuDS hierarchy, demonstrating why surface-based attenuation cannot fully manage the design volumes.

SuDS source controls such as tree-pits, raingardens and swales should be further reviewed together with source control to highways / access roads.

The adoption strategy should be clarified, and a detailed maintenance and management plan is required.

The above points should be addressed before the application is approved and not left to be the subject of conditions.

Infiltration testing has now been undertaken, and this matter is addressed in the assessment below.

Environment Agency

No objection subject to condition.

Street Lighting

No objection but the consultee has commented that they are unsure if the roads are to become adopted highway, and also, what existing highways are currently adopted leading to the site. Where roads are to be adopted, they would provide the specification as the Highway Lighting Authority and would be contacted once the applicant is entering into the Section 38 Agreement with our colleague John Gilligham.

For any area that is to remain private, unadopted, but have outdoor lighting then the applicant should provide detailed lighting design calculations and drawings to

demonstrate what standards and levels are being aimed for whilst complying to the recommendations laid out in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Greater Manchester Fire Service

No comments received.

Environmental Management

S106 contributions requested for formal sports and public open space.

School Services

No contributions requested.

National Highways

National Highways have commented that they have reviewed the Road Restraint Risk Assessment Process (RRRAP) and do not have any significant concerns with the report or its overall findings. The assessment shows that the hazards introduced by the development have been considered and that the RRRAP does not identify a requirement for additional VRS at this location to protect the hazards introduced.

National Highways did however request clarification on the boundary fence along the west of the site and how this relates to the existing National Highways boundary. They also requested clarification of the proposed attenuation pond at the northern tip of the site, with a need to confirm that this a pond with battered slopes and not an excavation for an underground storage tank.

These comments are addressed in the assessment below.

Natural England

No comments received.

Urban Design

Objection but comment are addressed in the assessment below.

Environmental Protection (Land Contamination)

No objection subject to condition.

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

No objection subject to conditions.

Strategic Housing

No objection.

Greater Manchester Police

No comments received.

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)

No objection.

REPRESENTATIONS

Letters of notification were sent to surrounding neighbours and site notices were posted in the vicinity of the site.

A press notice was also published in the local newspaper.

A number of comments were submitted across the 16 objections received which raised the following matters:

1. Development will create additional traffic and there are already limited passing places.
2. Waterfold Lane isn't wide enough to the site.
3. The road floods.
4. Access to the site is inappropriate and inadequate.
5. Road is not suitable for site traffic.
6. Visibility is already poor for existing traffic travelling along Waterfold Lane.
7. Fear for children's safety from the volume of traffic.
8. Waterfold Lane is a popular route for walkers, dog walkers, runners and cyclists who use the lane to access the surrounding countryside. As pedestrians are often required to step into the road due to vehicles being parked on the pavement, any increase in traffic would create an even greater risk to their safety.
9. Access to and from Lord Street could be obstructed, preventing or delaying residents from safely exiting their properties and potentially restricting access for emergency and service vehicles.
10. Concerns about flood risk at the proposed development site. The area is known locally to experience significant surface water issues.
11. The proposal would have an unacceptable impact on the area.

One comment of support was received which highlighted that the application site is an ideal site for housing.

ANALYSIS

Principle of Development

Policy Position

The entire application site is located within the Green Belt as allocated by the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (2024). PfE Policy JP-G9 which has superseded Core Strategy Policy (G4) sets out that *'the beneficial use of the Green Belt will be*

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

The NPPF confirms that the objective of Green Belt policy, as set out in Chapter 13 is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence.

NPPF Policy GB6.1 confirms that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it falls within one of the categories in Policy GB7.

NPPF Policy GB6.2 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Such circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm resulting from the proposed development, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. In making this assessment, substantial weight should be given to the harm to the Green Belt which would be caused, including harm to its openness.

NPPF Policy GB7 lists development which is not appropriate in the Green Belt and part GB7 1(g) is relevant to this application.

This particular element to Policy GB7 states that:

The following categories of development are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, and therefore should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt or be required to demonstrate very special circumstances:

g. Development where all of the following apply:

- i. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- ii. There is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed*
- iii. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3 of this Framework; and*
- iv. In the case of major development involving the provision of housing, the development proposed complies with policy GB8.*

NPPF Policy GB8 is relevant in this instance given the application constitutes a major development and this policy establishes the 'Golden Rules' that must all be met for residential development to be considered appropriate. These are:

a. affordable housing which reflects either:

i. development plan policy requirements for major development on land within or released from the Green Belt (as established under policy HO5(1)(a)(ii)); or

ii. until such policies are in place, a contribution which is 15 percentage points above the highest existing affordable housing requirement which would otherwise apply to the development, subject to a cap of a 50%. In the absence of a preexisting requirement for affordable housing, a 50% affordable housing contribution should apply by default.

b. necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and

c. The provision of new green space, or improvements to existing green space, which is accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their homes, whether through on-site provision or through access to offsite spaces. This provision should:

i. Make a positive contribution to the landscape setting of the development;

ii. Support nature recovery; and

iii. Meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan. Where no locally specific standards exist, development proposals should meet national standards relevant to the development (these include Natural England's standards on accessible green space and urban greening factor and Green Flag criteria). Where land has been identified as having potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes.

NPPF Policy GB8.2 confirms that on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, substantial weight should be given to the importance of complying with the Golden Rules.

Applicant's Position

The applicant's position is that the proposed development is fully compliant with the aforementioned NPPF Policies and the proposed development is not inappropriate development. The applicant is amenable to the position that where there may be an alternative view, should we as the LPA consider that the scheme is inappropriate development, then there are very special circumstances that would outweigh the limited harm to the Green Belt.

In this regard and in view of the application of any relevant very special circumstances, what results in very special circumstances is not specifically defined within either the NPPF or local policy. There could be a single and substantial factor that clearly

outweighs the harm, or a number of seemingly ordinary benefits which, when considered in isolation might not be individually particularly noteworthy, but collectively, clearly outweigh the harms, to amount to 'very special circumstances' existing.

The weight given to any particular factor, and their combination, is a matter of planning judgement for the decision taker and this is assessed below.

The LPA's view on whether the proposal would be inappropriate development

This application is for the erection of 24 new residential units within the Green Belt. NPPF Policy GB6 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt. NPPF Policy GB7 lists categories of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, and therefore this closed list of development should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt or be required to demonstrate very special circumstances.

In this instance as set out above, part GB7.1(g) is relevant and the first criteria for assessment is part i which considers whether:

i. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan:

Annex B to the Framework sets out that for the purposes of plan-making and decision-making, 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in policy GB2.

An assessment is now therefore made on the relevant purposes of the Green Belt as set out within NPPF Policy GB2.

Impact on the purposes a, b and d

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

The site comprises an open area of land which sits immediately adjacent to the east of the M66 motorway. Although, the site is contained by the M66 to the west, there are open fields to the north, east and south and so in that regard the site has a sense of openness and the proposed development in this instance would certainly impact on the visual and spatial aspects of openness in this location. It is also geographically related to the built-up areas of Bury.

The location of the application site taken together with the development applied for however is of a relatively limited scale so as to limit any impact of urban sprawl.

B) To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.

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

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

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

Summary

Overall, when considering the site against these purposes in line with PPG, there may be some weak to moderate contributions. However, it is accepted that the site does not strongly contribute to any of the above purposes (a), (b), or (d). The application site would therefore be considered to meet the definition of Grey Belt Land for the purposes of NPPF Policy GB7.1g(i).

Turning to the other criteria under NPPF Policy GB7.1g

ii. There is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed

In assessing this criteria Planning Officers acknowledge the comments provided within the submitted Planning Statement and Planning Statement Addendum dated August 2026 which incorporate the latest NPPF revisions, as well as the Affordable Housing Statement where figures from PfE have been provided. Planning Officers are also acutely aware of the developments provision of a 100% affordable housing at a social rent tenure and comments provided by Strategic Housing are also noted. Officers also acknowledge that the proposed development would inevitably contribute to the delivery of the Councils housing targets.

Firstly, Planning Officers recognise that the existence of a five-year housing land supply and achievement of the required Housing Delivery Test target does not usually preclude the approval of further housing.

Footnote 41 of the NPPF explicitly sets out how this criterion should be interpreted in relation to housing proposals, stating:

'in the case of applications involving the provision of housing, means the lack of a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites, including the relevant buffer where applicable, or where the Housing Delivery Test result was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years'

Officers consider this point to be unambiguous, and at present the Council is able to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites (as set out within the recent adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan) and the Council's latest Housing Delivery Test scores are above 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years, with Rochdale measuring 169% delivery versus the requirement in 2021, 142% in 2022 and 138% in 2023. The Council is therefore exceeding it's requirement based on the latest figures. Therefore, on the basis of the above, the

proposal would not demonstrate it is meeting an umet need as it is defined in the NPPF.

iii. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3 of this Framework

Turning to the next criteria, it is noted that the NPPF references sustainable transport, accessibility and the need for sustainable development throughout.

In terms of the proposed development, it is recognised that the proposal would incorporate a new pavement on the west side of Waterfold Lane which would include street lighting. A widened highway and introduction of relevant highway safety signage would also assist vehicular traffic using Waterfold Lane.

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

In this instance, as was pointed out at pre-application stage, in the opinion of Planning Officers, the site is in a weak location in terms of being able to access daily services by foot. Future residents of the development are therefore very likely to be heavily reliant upon the private car.

The provision of a new pavement as part of the proposed access strategy is welcomed but the walk from the application site to the nearest convenience store (Spar) is approximately a 7-minute walk on Bury New Road to the fuel station but this would only provide the very basic services.

Bus services such as the 163 provides a route from Bury – Heywood – Langley – Middleton – Piccadilly Gardens and the 471 from Bolton – Breightmet – Elton – Bury – Heywood – Rochdale and vice versa are located at the top of Waterfold Lane and services are frequent, roughly every 12-15 minutes until later on in the evening when they become every 30 minutes. The application site in that respect is therefore close to public transport access and is evidently well served by public transport services.

Heywood Town Centre is 2.1 miles to the east and Bury Town Centre is 1.4 miles to the west. Manual for Streets provides guidance on walkability in terms of meeting sustainable development but there remains scope for interpretation when it comes down to the sustainability test, and every application site is unique. Each application is assessed on its own planning merits and whether a site is considered sustainable depends on its location, surrounding services and infrastructure and the nature of the development proposed. Idealised notions of walkability do not always reflect local context such as topography, existing built environment, location of the application site. A walk to a convenience store or supermarket in one location such as a Local Service Centre would feel entirely reasonable, whereas different expectations would likely apply elsewhere where sites are outside of such centres as is the case here.

In this instance, future occupiers would have to contend with Heap Bridge Interchange if they were to walk from the application site and take the anticipated or expected route

to Bury in the west and pedestrian access is only available on the northern end of this junction. This journey involves crossing several key roads of the Interchange making it a very unattractive prospect for families with young ones, disabled residents or elderly residents. Residents in theory could travel south away from the application site and under the M66 motorway and join Waterfold on the west side of the M66 which would avoid Heap Bridge Interchange altogether, but this route would traverse through a very popular business park with very frequent vehicular movements. This route, particularly moving south on Waterfold Lane and under the M66 motorway would not be an attractive journey after dark and during periods of bad weather given the lack of street lighting.

It is not expected that residents would walk into Heywood Town Centre which would be a 50-minute trip one way.

It is also not considered that the walk from the application site to the aforementioned bus stops would be attractive particularly after daylight hours given the lack of streetlighting and other forms of artificial light in this semi-rural location. Whilst Waterfold Lane does benefit from street lighting, and street lighting would be incorporated as part of the scheme, this lighting is minimal and the open countryside location at the southern end of Waterfold Lane is not an inviting proposition for walking during the dark given the perception of isolation.

It is understood that NPPF Policy TR3 also now requires the use of the connectivity tool to be used in assessing the connectivity of a particular location. The applicants have undertaken an assessment in this regard.

In the Officers view, the application site is located where it would not limit the need to travel by private car and Planning Officers consider that it is more likely than not that future occupiers of the development would be heavily reliant on private car journeys. The proposed development would therefore not represent a location which is sustainable which is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework and the development would not be located where the need to travel by car would be limited.

iv. In the case of major development involving the provision of housing, the development proposed complies with Policy GB8

In addressing each part of Policy NPPF Policy GB8 it is considered that:

- a. The scheme in this instance provides for a 100% affordable provision which exceeds the required minimum contribution.
- b. The Councils Highways team have not requested any financial contribution, and it is noted that in this regard, no necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure have been requested either. The scheme proposes the construction of a new paved access as part of the proposed access improvements which by itself would improve local infrastructure in the vicinity of the site. In any case, in the event of an approval, conditions could be imposed relating to further improvements if considered necessary and subject to those conditions meeting the relevant tests.

c. NPPF Policy GB8.1(c), requires development to provide new green space or make improvements to existing green space which is accessible to the public.

Firstly, Planning Officers note that in the event of an approval financial contributions, have been requested from the Council's Environmental Management team and this is discussed in more detail toward the end of this assessment.

In regards to onsite space, the proposed development provides onsite amenity space for the use of future occupiers and onsite soft landscaping is also being provided. This would in theory address the requirement for the provision of new or improvements to existing, green spaces that are accessible to the public. However, in the Officers assessment, the proposed onsite green space is limited in terms of quantity and quality to a small circular area to the south of the site, a pedestrian path along the north boundary of the site adjacent to the river with 2 further small pockets of informal amenity space (one to the south of the plot 24 and another to the northwest corner of the site which also provides a seating area).

The area of amenity space to the south is immediately adjacent to the main vehicular access into the site and this would not make it an attractive area for children to play for example given its small size and the inevitable risk to their safety from vehicles accessing and egressing from the site, as well as from farm related vehicles traversing along Waterfold Lane.

The river path in the north purely creates a pedestrian link from the east of the site running west along the river boundary to the car park on the west side of the site. It is only approximately 80-100m in length and does not adjoin any existing public right of way or existing green space. The areas of informal amenity space accessible off this pedestrian link are small scale and again would not necessarily be an attractive proposition for children's play given their location next to an attenuation pond and the River Roch which both pose their own health and safety risks.

The onsite green space would likely only be used by future occupiers of the development and not by other members of the public given its small scale, location away from public areas and lack of play equipment for example. Additionally, all of this space is within the close setting of the M66 and would therefore be subject to noise levels comfortably exceeding acceptable standards for private residential amenity spaces.

Part c does not define what constitutes 'good quality' green space and whilst the proposed onsite green space is welcomed in providing inevitable biodiversity and visual amenity benefits, the nature of the small-scale space being provided and likely lack of functional / physical use would not constitute 'good quality' green space in the opinion of Planning Officers. At present and in the assessment of this particular point, the green space provided would feel contrived in its efforts to comply with this golden rule.

Summary

The scheme's failure to comply with Policy GB7.1(g) is sufficient to indicate that the development would be inappropriate in the Green Belt. The applicant has argued that

an appeal case 'APP/D2320/W/25/3376957' demonstrates that specific affordable needs can be considered with respect of unmet need, however the appeal explicitly sets out at paragraph 28, the assessment of the inspector in regards to this part of the policy (previous NPPF version), which covers only the council's overall housing land supply and delivery.

In this case, there is not an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed as defined by NPPF, the development is not sustainably located, and the development fails to provide for part c of the golden rule contributions.

For the reasons set out above, it is therefore concluded that the proposal would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Accordingly, any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness, must be considered further and whether very special circumstances exist. In accordance with NPPF Policy GB6, very special circumstances will only exist where the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other planning considerations.

Harm to the Green Belt

Harm by Definition

As stated above, the proposal is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. NPPF Policy GB6 states that when considering any planning application, Local Planning Authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Having established above that there is definitional harm, it is necessary to consider other forms of harm to the Green Belt. The next sub sections will therefore consider the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and the impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

Impact on Openness (View of the LPA)

Chapter 13 of the NPPF confirms that the objective of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The government attaches great importance to Green Belts, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence. Given that the development has been identified as being inappropriate, the next test is to assess the impact of the development upon the openness of the Green Belt in this location.

NPPF Policy GB2 sets out the 5 purposes of the Green Belt, one of which is to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. This approach is supported by PfE and it is considered that by virtue of encroaching into the undeveloped countryside in this location, the built form of the proposed development conflicts with the purposes of including land within it.

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

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

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

In assessing the spatial harm caused by the proposed development on the Green Belt openness, it is important to recognise that the absence of any significant visual intrusion does not in itself mean that there is no impact on openness. However, the spatial openness of the Green Belt is clear around the application site and the development would introduce a major development into an open area of land. There would, in the event of its construction be a greater impact on the openness by the simple merit of the quantum of development than what exists onsite now. Therefore, there would be a reduction in the spatial openness of the application site, and this is harmful to the Green Belt.

Visually, whilst the application site is screened to the west by a ribbon of mature trees adjacent to the M66 Motorway, it remains entirely visible across the north, east and south. The applicants submitted Landscape Appraisal highlights the openness of the application site and surrounding land to the south.

Overall, the development would result in harm to spatial and visual openness, contrary to the requirements of paragraph 142 of the NPPF. I

The development would lead to a loss of Green Belt openness and would also impact on the Green Belt purpose of safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, contrary to the Framework.

Openness Conclusion

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

Consequently, the development negatively impacts upon both spatial and visual openness.

In conclusion, the conflict with purposes, taken together with the impact upon openness and definitional harm by reason of inappropriateness, culminate that

substantial weight should be attached to the harm to the Green Belt as a result of the proposal.

Other Harm

As set out in NPPF Policy GB6.2, 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. Accordingly, there is a need to assess whether any other harm would result from the proposed development.

Noise

Core Strategy Policy G9 sets out the Council's requirements approach to all forms of pollution including the risk of noise, as they relate to new development.

National Planning Policy P3 confirms that development proposals should be appropriate for their location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, whether these effects are on or off-site; and whether this is as a result of the development itself or the product of preexisting conditions in its vicinity.

National Planning Policy P3 2b sets out that development proposals should not give rise to, or contribute to, an unacceptable level of access to daylight and sunlight for neighbouring residents and occupiers, or unacceptable levels of air, noise, artificial light, water, soil or other forms of pollution on or beyond the site. Adverse impacts of this nature should be avoided where possible, or else mitigated to an acceptable degree.

National Planning Policy P3 2d also confirms that development proposals should mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impact resulting from noise, not result in levels of noise exposure which would have a significant observed adverse effect, and maintain the character of tranquil areas.

The NPPG states that local planning authorities' decision taking should take account of the acoustic environment and in doing so consider whether or not a significant adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur; whether or not an adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur; and whether or not a good standard of amenity can be achieved.

Policies DM1 and G9 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy seek to ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding land uses, both in terms of its impact upon those uses and the impact of the surrounding land uses upon the amenities of future residents / users, also requiring that development does not have impacts that lead to an unacceptable increase in air, water, noise, light or other pollution.

The conclusions of the submitted Noise Impact Assessment are noted. Planning Officers concerns relate to two matters:

1. The appearance and impact of the 3m high acoustic barrier / absorbing barrier. A 3m high boundary treatment for a terraced dwelling would introduce a prominent feature that would present a very strong sense of enclosure. Particularly for plot 24 which would be subject to two 3m boundary treatments as well as the dwelling furthest north on the western block of dwellings at unit 18.

Similarly, the provision of a 1.5m high boundary treatment fronting plots 19-24 would also introduce an overbearing boundary treatment on the principle elevation of these plots which forms a visual focal point as you approach the proposed development.

Core Strategy Policy DM1 requires developments to be of high-quality design and take the opportunity to enhance the quality of the area. Whilst the actual structural design and integrity of the proposed acoustic barrier could be high quality, its actual structural appearance by virtue of its 3-metre-high visual impact on future residents would create an overbearing impact and visually oppressive feature for any future occupying residents.

Overall, the scheme is dominated by excessively tall boundary treatments which may be necessary to mitigate against the surrounding acoustic environment, but this comes at a detrimental cost to the overall visual aesthetic of the proposed development as the over proliferation and overbearing appearance of them significantly impacts the character of the development.

2. The submitted Noise Impact Assessment confirms that *based on the predicted external sound levels shown in Figure 1 in Appendix 3, the sound levels at most rear gardens of the proposed development are below the required 55 dB LAeq,16hours, highlighted by the green and light green colour. In some of these gardens, exceedances of up to 2 dB of the criterion of 55 dB LAeq,16hours are predicted, which are marginal (see orange areas in Figure 1 in Appendix 3). For each of these gardens, the external predicted sound levels in the majority of each garden area are still below the criterion. This means that the residents will still have access to a quiet area within their garden.*

The ProPG refers to the design ranges in BS 8233:2014 with respect to the assessment of external amenity. The ProPG also refers to guidance in the PPG. Based on these two documents, the following guidance is provided with respect to the assessment of noise in external amenity areas: "The acoustic environment of external amenity areas that are an intrinsic part of the overall design should always be assessed and noise levels should ideally not be above the range 50 – 55 dB LAeq,16hr.

Evidently, even with the provision of the proposed Acoustic Barrier, gardens of all the properties on the western block and some properties on the eastern block have areas of them that still exceed what is considered to be the required dB level for external amenity areas. The front gardens of plot 19-24 are also subject to noise levels between 55-60dB. A small section of the front garden of plot 19 is in fact subject to noise levels excess 60dB. Furthermore, the vast majority of all communal external amenity spaces provided would be above 60db, potentially quite significantly above it in places.

Core Strategy Policy G9 requires new developments such as housing to not be adversely affected by existing sources of pollution such as roads and certain types of industry.

The proposed development is located adjacent to the M66, and as such, the site is influenced by significantly influenced by road traffic noise associated with this strategic transport corridor. The proposed design is clearly dominated by responses to the site constraints and still is unable to provide pleasant acoustic environments to all relevant spaces. This is contrary to NPPF Policy P3.2(a) where development proposals should provide healthy living conditions for occupiers in terms of avoid exposure to levels of noise that would have an unacceptable adverse effect on the health and quality of life.

The Framework seeks to create places that promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for future users. It also requires that developments should mitigate, and reduce to a minimum, potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life. The ProPG: Planning and Noise2 (ProPG) document sets out most residents value the ability to open windows.

Being required to keep windows closed in the proposed dwellings to assist in achieving acceptable internal noise levels is far from desirable and raises concerns over the suitability of the site for residential use.

The applications Noise Impact Assessment has also shown that the internal ADO criterion for the maximum night-time sound levels with windows open is exceeded at any bedrooms exposed to external free-field night-time maximum sound levels higher than 64 dB LAeq, 8h. Therefore, the acousticians have set out that it is likely that during detailed design stage alternative means of removal of excess heat, i.e., a mechanical ventilation system or a mechanical cooling system, would need to be considered for such façades with bedrooms to meet the ADO criteria. In this regard, whilst Planning Officers consider that this could be technically achievable, it again restricts the amenity standards of residents in what is a semi-rural location.

The applicants Noise Impact Assessment also quite clearly highlights the significant noise levels that are experienced across all external public amenity areas, and this would be contrary to NPPF Policy P3.2(b).

BS8233:2014 is a guide and not a policy requirement that draws on research to provide recommendations. Whilst most of the development may be seen to adhere to BS 8233:2014, future residents should not be subject to adverse sources of pollution such as noise within their private residences as is shown to be the case in Appendix 3 of the Noise Impact Assessment. Whilst the council's Environmental Health Officer accepts that the proposal could achieve relevant technical standards, planning officers must assess this within the full context of the residential amenity and quality of overall accommodation that would be provided. On the above basis, officers have concluded that the development would fail to comply with Core Strategy Policy G9.

In addition, Core Strategy Policy DM1 expects developments to demonstrate that they are compatible with surrounding land uses, both in terms of its impact upon those uses and the impact of the surrounding land uses upon the amenities of future residents /

users. It also expects developments to mitigate against any impacts due to noise and to not have an adverse impact on health.

Whilst the resulting scheme by its very nature would not cause any significant impacts in terms of noise and disturbance, the site is significantly hampered by the surrounding land uses. In the Planning Officers Assessment, the proposed mitigation measures and NIA demonstrate that the development would not satisfy the requirements of CS Policy DM1 or the NPPF.

Occupier Amenity

In terms of occupier amenity, Officers must consider if the proposed development provides both sufficient internal and external space that is proportionate to the size of the dwelling ensuring that any space provided meets the needs and requirements for future occupiers for the lifetime of the development.

The Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) is a technical standards document produced by the Government to ensure internal space within new dwellings is sufficient for future occupiers. Additionally, in accordance with PfE Policy JP-H3 (Type, Size and Design of New Housing), it is a requirement for all new dwellings to comply with the nationally described space standards and be built to the accessible and adaptable standard in Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations unless specific site conditions make this impracticable.

The Nationally Described Space Standards state in order to provide one bed space, a single bedroom must be at least 7.5sqm in area and at least 2.15m wide. In order to provide 2 bed spaces, a double bedroom must have a floor area of at least 11.5 sqm. On review of the submitted proposed floorplans, the proposed development complies with and exceeds the minimum requirements set out within the NDSS.

However, in commenting on this planning application, the Council's Strategic Housing team have commented that as at June 2026, 67 households are still awaiting fully wheelchair adapted accommodation with the average wait time currently at 529 days and some households waiting for 5 years + for a home that meets their needs. 40 households that are currently residing in council-provided temporary accommodation in Rochdale include at least one family member with a physical or mental disability (23 physical, 17 learning). The data emphasises the need for properties that are constructed to M4(3) standard in addition to M4(2).

It is noted that following amendments 3 dwellings are now proposed to be built to the M4(3) standard which would to some degree provide a positive response to the comments raised by the Councils Strategic Housing team and the scheme will construct all houses and all the ground floor apartments to M4(2) standards which is welcomed. As there is no lift proposed, the three first floor apartments are not compliant with M4(2) standards.

Parking

In accordance with the Councils schedule of parking standards set out in Appendix 5 of the adopted Core Strategy the following standards should be applied:

Up to 2 spaces should be provided per dwelling for 2+ bedroom houses outside town centres and 1.25 spaces should be provided per dwelling for single bedroom apartments.

NPPF Policy TR4.1(e) sets out that to contribute to creating well-designed places, transport considerations should be integral to the design of the development, proposals for which should provide a suitable number of parking spaces for a range of transport modes where appropriate, reflecting the location and nature of the development (including its connectivity), any locally-set standards in the development plan, and including adequate provision of spaces and infrastructure that allow for the charging of electric vehicles in safe, accessible and convenient locations.

In this instance, the applicants have confirmed that the proposed development would provide 5 parking spaces off the eastern access and 21 off the western access (i.e. 26 total spaces across the site). 2 spaces would be provided to mobility standards, with 25% of spaces fitted with electric vehicle charging.

In review of the submitted proposed site layout (amended) R0832 Rev B, the parking provision by the Planning Officers calculations appears to be 6 spaces off the eastern access, with 23 off the western access thereby totalling 29 spaces.

As set out earlier in this report, the site's location and limited options for easily travelling to local conveniences would likely result in a car dependent form of development. As such parking requirements should be toward the upper end of the CS standard as a shortfall would likely result in operational difficulty and result in on street parking and limiting of access.

The applicants were presented with the opportunity to increase parking provision as requested by Highways but the applicants have confirmed in the Planning Statement Addendum that in their opinion the site is sustainably located to support active and public transport and it is not considered necessary to provide additional parking at the requested level.

Accordingly, the scheme fails to provide a suitable number of parking spaces, and the scheme fails to comply with PfE Policy JP-C8 NPPF Policy TR4.1(e).

Very Special Circumstances

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

This Court of Appeal judgment is an important reminder that under NPPF Policy GB6 of, when considering any planning application concerning proposed development in the Green Belt, LPAs should continue to ensure that substantial weight is given to harm to the Green Belt and any other harm.

In light of the above assessment, it is necessary to now consider whether there are 'very special circumstances' which clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt (arising from the inappropriate development discussed above) and any other harm resulting from the proposal as set out in NPPF Policy GB6.2

Supporting the Council's Housing Targets

It is recognised that the provision of 24 additional dwellings at a 100% affordable provision would assist the Council in achieving its housing targets, and particular weight is given to the provision of social rent.

Some weight is also afforded to the delivery of Part M4(3) affordable homes, however this weight is limited by the wider issues of accessibility and quality of amenity standards for residents.

Delivery of BNG

The delivery of BNG is a statutory and policy requirement and the provision of biodiversity is expected regardless. The metric submitted with the application has confirmed that BNG cannot be achieved entirely on-site and off-site units will be required to deliver a 10% net gain. The proposed development has not demonstrated that it is significantly exceeding statutory or policy BNG requirements and the provision of BNG is therefore afforded very limited weight.

Summary

The other considerations and provisions set out within the supporting Planning Statement taken together accumulatively are not considered to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt identified above.

Conclusion

As assessed above, the proposed development would reduce the Green Belt's openness and its effectiveness at safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. Accordingly, the proposed development is contrary to the Framework's aims in respect of the Green Belt.

Moreover, NPPF Policy GB6.2 advises that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and that 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless these harms are 'clearly outweighed by other considerations. In this regard, it is not considered that individually or cumulatively, any very special circumstances exist that outweigh the harm identified and this harm is not clearly outweighed by any other considerations.

The application is therefore contrary to policies PfE Policy JP-G9 (The Green Belt) and Chapter 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design and Layout

The NPPF is unambiguous in its stance on the importance of design. National Planning Policy DP3 confirms that development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets.

In accordance with National Planning Policy DP3 2g, development proposals should create visually attractive, distinctive and characterful development to establish or maintain a strong sense of place and pride, including through the use of a coherent palette of materials, design features and planting.

Paragraph 3 of National Planning Policy DP3 also confirms that development proposals should be refused if, without clear justification, they conflict with paragraph 1 of this policy or relevant aspects of the principles in paragraph 2, or with any explicit design standards set out in the development plan (including those in locally specific policies, guides, codes or masterplans). Substantial weight should be given to compliance with relevant development plan policies when assessing the design quality of proposals.

Policies DM1 and P3 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy require development proposals to adhere to high-quality design and enhance the borough's identity and sense of place, by respecting context where it is positive and having regard to the scale, density, massing, height, layout, landscape, materials and access of surrounding buildings and areas in general.

The National Design Guide (NDG) states that "*The long-standing, fundamental principles for good design are that it is fit for purpose; durable; and brings delight*". The NDG advises that scale, appearance materiality and detailing of buildings are key components for well-designed places. The Building for a Healthy Life guidance document states that building forms and materials should be used to reflect local character.

The above considerations are largely reflected within Policies DM1 and P3 of the Council's adopted Core Strategy which ultimately require development proposals to demonstrate high-quality design.

The surrounding area is rural in character despite being somewhat enclosed by the River Roch in the north, sporadic development to the east, open countryside to the south and the m66 motorway to the west. The layout of the proposed development has therefore been significantly influenced by the acoustic environment owing to the siting of the m66 motorway in the west. In the view of Planning Officers, the proposed scheme would function better with houses fronting Waterfold Lane. This would be more in keeping with the immediate context which is partially rural despite featuring terrace rows.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement which explains that the orientation of the two residential blocks have maintained the parallel

relationship to the motorway therefore producing the optimum sound reduction to these private garden areas.

The Council's Urban Design team have been consulted on this application and as a consequence design amendments have been sought and implemented in the most recently provided drawing package.

In the opinion of Planning Officers, it is considered that in terms of the proposed elevations, the development proposed now has better architectural cohesion, helped by much improved drawing presentation that now helps convey a full sense of material and brick detailing. The designer has been proactive, incorporating advice regarding materiality and there is a significant improvement to all the dwellings and the development as a whole which is evidenced through material choices, colour and architectural detailing. The development as a whole now sits contextually much better than previous proposals and the commitment to high quality materials and detailing would make this development a sympathetic addition to the built environment. The visual interest to the proposed elevations and fenestration design is considered appropriate. The proposed materials palette is considered appropriate to the proposed development, noting it's context and environment, and in the event of an approval it has been agreed that this particular element could be conditioned and samples could be provided.

Save for the proposed smaller car parking area to the east, the majority of the proposed car parking is suitably located to the west and shielded by the development. This is broken up by soft and hard landscaping to eliminate the previous overly dominant appearance of the car parking area. All parking bays are proposed to be paved with block paving which would also assist in breaking up to legibility between the highway, access road and parking spaces.

However, as referred to above, the provision of the proposed acoustic fencing and hard boundary treatments as a whole is excessive across the site. Whilst Officers acknowledge the boundary treatments have been kept to a minimum in order to provide suitable and secure boundaries / curtilages and that they have been reduced in size as far as practicably possible whilst maintaining acceptable noise levels, the obtrusive and overbearing nature of their design would significantly harm the visual amenity of the proposed development.

Furthermore, the proposed boundary treatment fronting plots 19-24 is 1.5m in height and is therefore unusually taller than other traditional boundary treatments to the front of dwellings which are typically openly landscaped or delineated by a smaller boundary treatment.

The applicants have argued that *"whilst taller than traditional fencing, the fence will be read in context with the adjacent properties and is partially screened by the proposed landscaping. The glimpsed views of the fencing is considered appropriate to a residential development and is not likely to have an unacceptable impact on amenity"*.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the car parking area fronting plots 19-24 will be screened by a native hedgerow, this hedging will not totally screen the proposed boundary

treatments fronting plots 19-24 meaning that future occupants of these plots would be subject to a strong sense of enclosure both to the front but particularly to the rear.

Accordingly, it is considered that whilst materials are considered to be acceptable, the proposed extent of the hard landscaping proposed with reference to the aforementioned boundary treatments and their heights do not satisfy the overarching aims and objectives set out in local and national design guidance in addition to Policies P3 and DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy, Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Highways and Access

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

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

National Planning Policy TR6 paragraph 4 states that development proposals should be refused if they would have a severe adverse impact on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion, including cumulative impacts), or an unacceptable impact on highway safety; taking into account any mitigation measures proposed as well as any wider network improvements, including measures to support sustainable patterns of movement. This applies both during the construction phase and following completion.

Highway Services were consulted on this application, and they have commented that the nearest bus stop is within 400m of the application site providing good links to Rochdale, Bury, Manchester and beyond.

The traffic generation associated with the usage of the proposed development will most likely be noticeable against background traffic on this rural route, but Highways do not expect this to be problematic.

Notwithstanding the parking concerns raised, Highway Services have also raised concerns the visibility along the single carriageway section becoming overgrown and Highways have requested a landscaping plan to demonstrate how this would be prevented. It is acknowledged that the vegetation in question could be outside of the ownership of the applicants and the applicants would therefore not have any control over this vegetation. However, the applicants have confirmed that all proposed landscaping would be managed by the RP as part of on-going maintenance of the properties and those details could be conditioned in the event of an approval.

National Highways have most recently requested confirmation that the proposed attenuation pond is to be constructed with battered slopes as well as clarity on the

proposed boundary fence lying adjacent to the existing motorway fence. The applicants have since confirmed that

- The attenuation pond is proposed to have sloped sides at 1:3 and will not form an excavation for an underground storage tank. The cross-sections of this pond will form part of the detailed drainage design. In the event of an approval, this would be conditioned.
- The fence is confirmed as new, and in addition to the existing National Highways fence. The proposed fence sits within the site ownership boundary and will not impact the existing fence.

On the basis of the above, it is considered that the proposed development would make satisfactory arrangements for vehicle access, manoeuvring and facilitate safe and convenient pedestrian circulation to and from the site. The scheme is not considered to have an adverse impact on highway safety and would not generate a level of additional traffic which would have a detrimental impact on the safe and efficient operation of the immediate local highway network, or strategic routes.

However, as set out above, Highways Services have requested the provision of 150% parking provision which the applicants are unprepared to commit to. Accordingly, the scheme fails to comply with PfE Policy JP-C8 NPPF Policy TR4.1(e).

Occupier Amenity (private outdoor space)

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

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

The reasonable needs of occupiers would need to be met, and this would need to cover both functional and recreational requirements proportionate to the size of the household, taking into account the surrounding context. On reflection of the proposed layout, the proposed private garden area sizes to the rear of each dwelling appear to be adequate and they would cover the above aforementioned recreational requirements. For the reasons set out earlier in this report, officer do however maintain significant concerns over the quality of these spaces.

Residential and Neighbouring Amenity

Policy DM1 of the adopted Core Strategy requires that all development proposals are compatible with surrounding land uses, both in terms of its impact upon those uses and the impact of the surrounding land uses upon the amenities of future residents.

Development should not affect the amenity of residents or users through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy and development should mitigate against any impacts due to noise, dust, light and odour pollution. Policy

G9 also requires that sensitive new development such as housing, are not adversely affected by existing sources of pollution such as roads and certain types of industry.

National Planning Policy P3 confirms that development proposals should be appropriate for their location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, whether these effects are on or off-site; and whether this is as a result of the development itself or the product of preexisting conditions in its vicinity.

National Planning Policy P3 2b sets out that development proposals should not give rise to, or contribute to, an unacceptable level of access to daylight and sunlight for neighbouring residents and occupiers, or unacceptable levels of air, noise, artificial light, water, soil or other forms of pollution on or beyond the site. Adverse impacts of this nature should be avoided where possible, or else mitigated to an acceptable degree.

The Council's Guidelines and Standards for Residential Development SPD refers to Space Standards at Section 4.1 and this sets out minimum space standards that should be applied to all new residential development and development which affects existing residential properties. These distances are:

- 21m between directly facing principal windows of habitable rooms, at an upper floor level and 10.5m between a principal window at an upper floor level a directly facing boundary of the curtilage;
- 14m between a principal window and any directly facing two storey elevation which does not contain a principal window to a habitable room; and
- 10m between a principal window and any directly facing single storey elevation which does not contain a principal window to a habitable room.

The SPD advises that where these separation distances cannot be achieved, proposals should be "compatible with the density and character of surrounding development".

The scheme complies with the SPD in terms of its prescribed separation distances with both blocks of dwellings being appropriately distanced from one another. Officers are therefore satisfied that there would be no detrimental visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing, or loss of privacy from directly facing neighbouring properties.

Ecology and Biodiversity

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. CS Policy G7 requires that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity.

PfE Policy JP-G8 seeks to deliver a net enhancement of biodiversity resources through a collective of measures which are broadly aligned with the approach to BNG outlined within the Environment Act (2021), the NPPF and supporting guidance documents. The provisions of the Environment Act in respect of BNG are now a statutory requirement for planning applications and so the proposed development should achieve net gains for biodiversity in accordance with National Planning Policy N2.

National Planning Policy N2 sets out that if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, then the development should be refused.

The application is accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan. The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) were consulted on this application, and they have commented as follows:

The application site is not designated for its nature conservation value, and the interior of the site appears to have been cleared of vegetation recently, although it is recovering. However, there are important tree belts around the site boundaries, and the site is adjacent to the River Roch, an ecologically important feature and an important wildlife corridor through the borough.

Currently the plans show the main boundary tree belts as being largely retained, and a buffer zone between the built development and the river, but the planned development is relatively dense and the buffer zone between the river and the development is relatively narrow. I would prefer this buffer to be wider (10m +) in order to protect the river corridor.

Bats

The river will be an important foraging habitat for bats. The GMEU have advised that a lighting plan should be submitted to ensure that any future development does not result in direct lighting of the river course. All UK bats and their resting places carry a high level of legal protection. This would be conditioned in the event of an approval.

Invasive Plants

There are extensive stands of Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed on and close to the site. Under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) it would be an offence to cause these plants to spread in the wild. The GMEU would require the submission of a Control of Invasive Species Method Statement to be controlled by condition in the event of an approval.

Biodiversity Net Gain

With the current dense layout, the development will not be able to achieve the required net gains in biodiversity for area-based habitats or watercourse habitats. Given the strategically important location of the application site along the River corridor the

GMEU would prefer it if the built development were to be reduced in scale to allow for further on-site habitat creation.

The statutory Biodiversity Gain Condition will apply to any permission which may be granted to the proposals to require the pre-commencement of a final Biodiversity Gain Plan for the scheme. The Gain Plan must provide details of how, and where, the required biodiversity gains are to be delivered. A long-term habitat creation, management and monitoring plan must also be provided for all on-site habitats created or enhanced.

Summary

It is recognised that the proposed development has been designed to retain and safeguard existing ecological features on site with the majority of existing trees on site being retained.

The submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Plan confirms that the existing native hedgerow along the southern site boundary will be retained in its entirety, preserving its function as a linear wildlife corridor and supporting habitat connectivity. Removal of habitats in poor or moderate condition, including areas of modified grassland and other neutral grassland, is unavoidable to accommodate the layout; however, the design incorporates substantial new habitat creation within public open space to offset these losses. This includes:

- 1091 m² of wildflower grassland (other neutral grassland – moderate condition) along the northeast, north, and west of the site
- 1536 m² of low-ecological-value grassland
- Ornamental shrub planting
- 48 new trees planted across public open spaces
- 118m, 53m, and 62m lengths of new hedgerow

The application is accompanied by an Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Statement with an associated Biodiversity Metric.

It is noted that the site is not allocated for nature conservation under local planning policy and nor is the site subject to any statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations.

To compensate for the loss of on-site BNG, habitat units must be delivered both on-site and off-site in order to achieve the 10% net gain target. The BNG metric has confirmed that to achieve a 10% net gain, an additional 0.83 habitat units and 0.09 watercourse units are required, in addition to the landscaping proposals. In the event of an approval, the additional units would be secured via a recognised habitat bank or operator within the local or regional area, with preference given to offset sites located within Bury or the wider Greater Manchester Nature Recovery Strategy area, in accordance with the Defra biodiversity gain hierarchy and trading rules.

The developer has in the event of an approval therefore indicated that they would be happy to provide contributions to fund off-site habitat improvements through a recognised habitat bank to comply with the requirements and regulations. In the event of an approval the applicant would be required to provide information on where the units are being purchased and evidence that an agreement is in place to purchase them when they apply to discharge the statutory biodiversity gain condition. GMEU are satisfied with this approach.

In the event of an approval, subject to conditions, the proposed development would accord with the requirements of Policies G6 and G7 of the adopted Core Strategy, JP-G8 of PfE, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Trees and Landscaping

National Planning Policy N3 recognises the benefits that trees can provide for biodiversity, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and the character and quality of the built environment, development proposals should ensure that the selection of species and their placement is compatible with highways and other infrastructure requirements and the needs of different users of public spaces; and will be effective in helping to adapt to the effects of climate change and delivering other environmental benefits. Provision should also be made for the long-term maintenance of both existing and newly planted trees which form part of the development.

CS Policy G6 expects development proposals affecting green infrastructure to avoid the loss of existing features such as trees unless suitable alternative provision is made or they have limited value. Development proposals are also expected to replace removed trees from a site at a ratio of 2:1.

As referred to above, CS Policy G7 requires that no development should result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity.

The development would directly affect existing trees on the application site, but the proposed works would only require the removal of 2 individual trees (Categorised as 1 x U and 1 x B) and the partial removal of a tree group (Categorised as B).

The Councils Tree Officer consultee has not provided any comments, but Planning Officers recognise that a significant number of new trees will be implemented into the scheme as part of the proposed soft landscaping works. Therefore, in its totality, this would represent a replacement ratio far greater than two for one. The proposed landscaping would incorporate small and medium tree planting along with scrub land, wildflower meadows and native hedgerows.

In the event of an approval, subject to implementing the proposals as illustrated on Drawing No R0832 Rev C 'Landscaping Proposals', the proposed development would satisfy Policy JP-G7 of PfE and CS Policy G7 which set out to ensure proposals increase tree cover, protect and enhance woodland and connect people to the trees and woodland around them.

Drainage and Flood Risk

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

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

National Planning Policy F8(1) states that development proposals which could affect drainage on or around the development site should incorporate sustainable drainage systems to control flow rates and reduce volumes of runoff, in ways which are proportionate to the nature and scale of the proposal. The systems employed should provide multifunctional benefits where possible, facilitating improvements in water quality, biodiversity and amenity.

The majority of the site is located within Flood Zone 1, having a less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability of flooding but a parcel of the site in the north adjacent to the River Roch is located within Flood Zone 3 meaning that the land here is assessed as having greater than in a 100 year annual probability of fluvial flooding in any year.

As a requirement of NPPF Policy F2.1(a) and F5 and F6, the proposed development should satisfy the requirements of the Sequential Test and where applicable the Exception Test.

Sequential Test:

Under the NPPF (2026), Zone 1 is defined as Low probability flood risk. The proposal is for a residential development with external parking, which in line with Table 1 is classified as 'More Vulnerable'. Placing both these criteria into Table 2 (Flood Risk Vulnerability and Flood Zone 'Incompatibility'), More Vulnerable development in Flood Zone 1 determines that 'Development is Appropriate.'

Exception Test:

As the Sequential test is passed, the Exception test is therefore not required.

A Flood Risk Assessment Outline Drainage Strategy has been submitted in support of this application, and this sets out that the proposed design philosophy is:

- Surface water treatment using the 'Management Train' approach to remove and isolate contamination at all SuDS facilities prior to conveyance to the existing drainage infrastructure.
- Prevention measures in the form of water butts to the rear RWP's.

- Source control in the form of permeable surfacing.
- Site control in the form of a small attenuation pond and Geocellular attenuation tank.

In addition, based on the nature of the development, a lifespan in excess of 100 years is anticipated. Therefore, the potential climate change allowance for the 2070's ranges between 30% for the central allowance and 45% for the upper end allowance. As such, an allowance of 45% for climate change on peak rainfall intensity will be included in calculations.

The general principle of the surface water drainage strategy is to collect the runoff from the roof of the new residential units via the downpipes. The water will then be directed to a new below ground surface water drainage network that will pick up the runoff from the access road and driveways, and outfall to the adjacent River Roch at a restricted rate of 5l/s. Attenuation will take the form of a small attenuation pond. The proposed private drainage layout for the new development building will be designed in accordance with BS EN 752: 2008 and Building Regulations Part H guidance. This is to indicate no surcharge for the 2-year storm event and no flooding for up to the 30-year storm event.

The surface water drainage strategy for the new development site will be to limit the surface water runoff to existing Greenfield discharge rates with attenuation measures incorporated. The new surface water networks will be designed in line with current British Standard guidance up to the 100-year storm return period including an allowance for climate change.

The Drainage Strategy appears to have been amended in line with the amended proposed site layout and subsequently, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), United Utilities (UU) and the Environment Agency (EA) were all consulted on this application and they have commented as follows:

LLFA

- The previous submission had all flows routed via an attenuation pond whereas the current proposal is for all flows to be routed via a buried tank. This is considered to be a retrograde step. The proposals include for a pond within part the network. However, there is no flow control and therefore it is unclear how the pond is intended to operate. In addition, only approximately 15% of the site area is now being routed via the pond.
- Previous LLFA comments requested further investigation of infiltration potential. There is no evidence that this has been undertaken and remains outstanding. It is noted that the sieve analysis results appear to support the view that soils are predominantly sands, gravels and cobbles which may offer infiltration potential.
- Previous LLFA comments requested incorporation of SuDS source control. There is no indication that this has been assessed further. This required for private areas and access roads / highways.
- Previous LLFA comments requested clarification of the adoption strategy for drainage and highway infrastructure.

- Surface water is limited to the 1 in 1-year greenfield runoff rate, estimated as 4.9 l/s. Therefore, it is acceptable to design to a 5 l/s outfall to mitigate blockages.
- Hydraulic calculations apply a correct 45% climate change factor to a 1 in 100-year event. Up to this event, surcharging is present which increases with return period. At the 1 in 100-year + 45% CC event, 'Flood Risk' status is noted at several locations within the system, including the newly introduced tank node. For the 30 year event, the majority of the nodes are shown as surcharged.
- A maintenance and management plan for all drainage components should be submitted.

The LLFA therefore requested that:

- The inclusion of a geocellular tank must be justified against the SuDS hierarchy, demonstrating why surface-based attenuation cannot fully manage the design volumes.
- SuDS source controls such as tree-pits, raingardens and swales should be further reviewed together with source control to highways / access roads.
- The adoption strategy should be clarified, and a detailed maintenance and management plan is required.
- The above points should be addressed before the application is approved and not left to be the subject of conditions.

Since receiving the LLFA comments above the applicants committed to undertaking further infiltration testing was carried out which is now appended to the revised Flood Risk Assessment Rev E.

The Percolation Testing was carried out on site on 24th August 2026 to establish if infiltration methods were going to be a suitable solution for draining the site. The testing concluded that Infiltration methods of drainage will not be viable for this site and strategy.

United Utilities

UU have confirmed that following their review of the revised drawings, and given the proximity of the proposed development, including the highway improvement works and construction of a new retaining wall to the existing embankment, to United Utilities' assets and apparatus, their position is that they must object to the proposed scheme.

Following their review of the proposed site layouts (drawing numbers R 0832 PL 19 dated April 2026 and R-0832-11 dated April 2026) and the proposed Shuttle Working Arrangement (drawing number J000540/SK101 Rev C dated 04.06.2025) and Retaining Wall General Arrangement and sections (drawing number GK4503-C-001 Rev B dated 19.08.25), United Utilities has concerns regarding the proximity of proposed development to their strategic large diameter trunk mains. These must not be built over, nor should access to the pipelines be compromised in any way. The proposals include new highway improvement works along the access road, including road widening, the installation of fencing and bollards along the footway, and the construction of a new retaining wall on the existing embankment. In the absence of an accurate plan clearly demonstrating the relationship between the proposed

development, the strategic large diameter trunk mains, and other water and wastewater mains crossing the site, United Utilities object to the proposed development.

UU have however set out that in the event of an approval, an appropriately worded condition could be added to any permission, although, this would not be their preferred approach.

The applicants are prepared to accept a suitably worded condition in the event of an approval.

Environment Agency

The EA have provided guidance on acquiring an Environmental Permit for flood risk activities and contaminated land.

The EA note that the current or previous use(s) of the site may present an unacceptable risk of contamination that could be mobilised during site works and construction, potentially leading to pollution of controlled waters. Controlled waters are particularly sensitive in this location because the proposed development site is located upon a secondary aquifer A.

The EA have confirmed that the proposed development will be acceptable, if a planning condition is included requiring the submission and validation of a detailed land contamination management strategy for unsuspected contamination during the enabling, construction and/or development works.

Summary

Whilst the EA are satisfied with the development in the event of an approval, overall, through consulting the LLFA and United Utilities, the proposed drainage strategy to serve the proposed development is unacceptable and it is considered that the proposal is contrary to the requirements of the NPPF and CS Policy G8. Whilst the required information could in some circumstances be controlled via planning conditions, officers in this instance are concerned that due to the highly constrained nature of the site, the requirements to provide a SUDS hierarchy compliant drainage scheme, combined with potential amendments required for protection of the UU assets could necessitate significant changes to the overall scheme. As such further upfront details would be required in the event of approval.

Pollution

Air Quality

Core Strategy policy G9 sets out the Council's requirements approach to all forms of pollution including the risk of noise, as they relate to new development.

National Planning Policy P3 confirms that development proposals should be appropriate for their location, taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, whether

these effects are on or off-site; and whether this is as a result of the development itself or the product of preexisting conditions in its vicinity.

National Planning Policy P3 2b sets out that development proposals should not give rise to, or contribute to, an unacceptable level of access to daylight and sunlight for neighbouring residents and occupiers, or unacceptable levels of air, noise, artificial light, water, soil or other forms of pollution on or beyond the site. Adverse impacts of this nature should be avoided where possible, or else mitigated to an acceptable degree.

CS Policy G9 confirms that the Council will reduce all forms of pollution by:

- Focusing on measures that reduce air pollution in Air Quality Management Areas, and other areas where pollution levels are unacceptable, particularly around motorways and main roads;
- Requiring that development does not have impacts that lead to an unacceptable increase in air, water, noise, light or other pollution;
- Ensuring sensitive new developments such as housing, schools and hospitals are not adversely affected by existing sources of pollution such as roads and certain types of industry.

National Planning Policy P3 paragraph 2c sets out that development proposal should sustain and contribute to compliance with relevant limit values or national objectives and targets for air pollutants including PM2.5. Development proposals should take account of Air Quality Management Areas and be consistent with the objectives of relevant Air Quality Action Plans, Clean Air Plans and Local Air Quality Strategies.

The application is accompanied and Air Quality Assessment which concludes that during the construction phase of the development there is the potential for air quality impacts as a result of fugitive dust emissions from the site. These were assessed in accordance with the IAQM methodology. Assuming good practice dust control measures are implemented, the residual significance of potential air quality impacts from dust generated by earthworks, construction and track out activities was predicted to be not significant.

Potential impacts during the operational phase of the proposals may occur due to road traffic exhaust emissions associated with vehicles travelling to and from the site. These were assessed against the relevant screening criteria. Due to the low number of vehicle trips generated by the proposals, impacts were not predicted to be significant.

The proposal has the potential to expose future occupants to elevated pollution levels. Dispersion modelling was therefore undertaken in order to predict concentrations across the site as a result of emissions from the highway network. Results were subsequently verified using local monitoring data.

The results of the dispersion modelling assessment also indicated that NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations were predicted to be below the relevant AQOs and Interim Target at the building façade. As such, the site is considered suitable for the proposed use from an air quality perspective.

The Council's Environmental Health team were consulted on the application in respect of air quality impacts and they have no objection subject to condition and in this regard, in the event of an approval, suitably worded conditions could be implemented to ensure that air quality factors are not a constraint to the proposed development which would comply with the NPPF and Policy G9 of the adopted CS.

Land Contamination

Policy G9 requires that any risks arising from contaminated land are identified and that any appropriate actions are taken. A Geoenvironmental Site Investigation Report accompanies the application, and this concludes that there is a moderate to low potential risk from soil contamination to construction workers and ground workers during development, and appropriate measures such as PPE, site health plans, appropriate disposal of material arisings will be required to mitigate this risk.

In addition, based on the results of the chemical testing, contaminant concentrations of arsenic and beryllium were found to exceed the screening criteria. Additionally, multiple PAHs including Benzo(a)pyrene, along with heavy fractions of TPH, were also found to exceed the screening criteria for residential development with plant uptake, exclusively within the made ground of CP1. Therefore, the risk to future end users is moderate and a remediation strategy will be required for the proposed development.

The report also clarifies that based on the results of the chemical testing, in general low concentrations of contaminants were observed in the groundwater which were below the EQS values and Drinking Water Standards.

However, 5 exceedances were identified in three of the tested samples referring to heavy metals and a slightly acidic pH.

Whilst this type of contamination poses no risk to future end users, due to the presence of the River Roch directly north of the site, there is a moderate to low risk to controlled waters.

It is therefore recommended that sampling and testing of the surface water in the River Roch is conducted both upstream and downstream from the site, to assess the presence of contaminants leaching into the local watercourse.

The Council's Land Contamination Officer (LCO) was consulted on this application, and they have noted that the report recommends a remediation strategy based on the above, which are to include details of gas protection measures. They also note the report says that further surface water sampling should be undertaken. The LCO has advised that they expect to see the former reservoirs and filter beds included within any remediation strategy, as these were not targeted during the investigation, and therefore their presence and contamination status are unknown.

In the event of an approval it has been confirmed through consultation with the Council's Environmental Protection team that this matter can be dealt with by a suitably worded condition.

Therefore, in light of the above, and subject to the imposition of an appropriate condition as recommended, it is considered that all contamination risks can be suitably addressed and there is no conflict with the requirements of CS Policy G9 or the Framework.

Crime Impact

Policy P3 of the CS requires all new developments to incorporate design measures that design out crime and ensure developments and spaces are safe to use and access. Similarly Policy DM1 requires all development proposals to minimise opportunities for crime against people or property.

The application is not supported by a Crime Impact Statement but the accompanying Design and Access Statement confirms that boundary treatments adhere to 'Secured by Design' principles, emphasizing natural surveillance where possible and incorporating security features as necessary

Greater Manchester Police have been consulted on this application, but their comments remain outstanding. Notwithstanding the absence of any comments from the Greater Manchester Police, Planning Officers consider that the proposed development has been considered to minimise opportunities for crime and the development is appropriately designed with natural surveillance.

Energy Demand and Climate Change Adaptation

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

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

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

Greater Manchester's vision is to be at the forefront of action on climate change and to make its fair contributions to international commitments by becoming a carbon neutral city region by 2038.

In accordance with Point 5 (d) of PfE Policy JP-S2 there is an expectation that new residential development will, unless it can be demonstrated that it is not practicable or financially viable, achieve energy demand reductions in terms of space heat demand, hot water energy demand and the delivery of on-site energy generation in accordance with table 5.1.

In this instance, the application is accompanied by an Energy Statement which has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of the relevant planning policies and sustainable energy objectives.

The principles of a Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green philosophy have been applied, resulting in a 84.59% carbon emissions improvement and a 68.24% primary energy improvement over Building Regulations Part L1 2021.

Photovoltaic panels are proposed to be installed on the pitched roofs of all dwellings and Air Source Heat Pumps are proposed to be connected to all residential units.

Through sustainable design and construction comprising a fabric first design approach and as a result of the implementation of the above renewable energy and energy saving measures, the development proposal achieves carbon efficiency reductions through a highly efficient thermal fabric, improved thermal bridging and low air leakage following the Be Lean methodology defined in the Energy Hierarchy.

Accordingly, in the event of an approval and subject to appropriately worded conditions requiring further details on the proposed measures, the proposal would be satisfactory in terms of the objectives of PfE Policy JP-S2 and CS Policies G1 and G2.

Developer Contributions and Viability

CS Policy DM2 requires developers to provide, or contribute towards the cost of physical, environmental and social infrastructure that is needed because of proposed development; and or to mitigate the impact of development, through planning obligations and agreements, if the development would otherwise have a negative impact on the delivery of a strategic objective. However, this policy also requires consideration to be given to the need to ensure that schemes remain viable whilst taking into account the need for contributions or infrastructure required to make the scheme acceptable in planning terms. In the case of residential development such as this, the Core Strategy typically requires contributions towards affordable housing (Policy C4), open space provision and maintenance (Policy G6) and education facilities (Policy C7).

In line with this, PfE Policy JP-D2 generally requires developers to provide or contribute towards the provision of mitigation measures to make a development acceptable in planning terms. It states that in the instance an applicant raises viability issues, clear evidence is required at application stage to identify the specific issues and/or changes in circumstance that are acting as barriers to delivery.

NPPF Policy DM5 sets out that where development proposals accord with relevant up-to-date plan policies and national decision-making policies, they should be assumed to be viable. Relevant policies in this context are those that relate to the contributions expected from development. It is up to the applicant to demonstrate whether particular circumstances justify the need for a viability assessment at application stage. The weight to be given to a viability assessment is a matter for the decision maker, having regard to all the circumstances in the case, including whether the plan and the viability evidence underpinning it is up to date, and any change in site circumstances since the plan was brought into force. All viability assessments should

reflect the recommended approach in national planning guidance, including standardised inputs, and should be made publicly available.

In this regard the applicant has not submitted a viability appraisal. Nevertheless, in assessment of the scheme's viability, it is important to note that the scheme is being brought forward as a 100% affordable housing development, rather than a market sale scheme. As such, there are obvious inherent viability constraints that necessitate a careful balance between achieving high-quality design and ensuring deliverability. While design quality remains a priority, the extent of any additional enhancements beyond what have already been undertaken or s106 contribution requests would need to be considered in the context of maintaining a viable and deliverable scheme, particularly in the context of delivering affordable homes.

Each relevant contribution is assessed individually below:

Education

CS Policy C7 seeks developer contributions for the provision of educational facilities (including new school places) and employment skills and training in order to improve education, skills and training in the borough and raise educational achievement. The Schools Services team were consulted on this application, and they have confirmed that no contributions will be sought in this instance.

Affordable Housing

The Council's affordable housing requirements are set out in the Affordable Housing SPD and are applicable to developments of over 15 dwellings. Where on-site provision is proposed, a total of 15% of total site capacity should be provided at an affordable level for a total discount equal to 7.5% GDV. Given the proposal seeks to provide 100% affordable provision, no commuted sum would be required.

POS and Formal Sports

Contributions have been sought in regard to the improvement of Darnhill Play area for Public Open Space (POS) and for formal sports the Sutherland Road Sports Pitches or Heywood Sports Village.

On review of this and in accordance with the Council's Planning Obligations Table of Charges for recreational open space improvements, the total contribution requested would be:

£6,289.86 for the proposed 1-bedroom units and;

£56,608.92 for the proposed 3-bedroom dwellings.

This would total £62,898.78 inclusive of the applicable 5% administrative charge.

Therefore, in the event of an approval and subject to a s106 agreement for the requested contribution, the proposed development would be compliant with the requirements of Policies G6 and DM2 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, the

Supplementary Planning Document 'Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing' (2008, updated January 2017) and the NPPF.

Planning Balance and Conclusions

Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. NPPF Policy S3 requires decisions on development proposals to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and this means that in all locations, development proposals that accord with both an up-to-date development plan and the decision-making policies in the Framework should be approved without delay.

NPPF Policy GB6.2 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt, including harm to its openness. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

As assessed above, in principle, the proposed development is inappropriate development within the Green Belt and therefore, is harmful by definition. The proposal would conflict with the five purposes that Green Belt serves.

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

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

When viewed as a whole, the development fails to comply with the NPPF Policies GB7.1(g) and Policy GB8 relating to the Golden Rules, and very special circumstances do not exist as the identified harm is not clearly outweighed by other considerations, and the application is therefore contrary to policies PfE Policy JP-G9 (The Green Belt) and the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed development fails to build all residential units to accessible and adaptable standard in accordance with Part M4(2) of the Building Regulations and the development therefore does not succeed in providing an acceptable level of occupier amenity contrary to PfE Policy JP-H3.

Recommendation: Refuse

Refusal(s) (3)

- 1 The proposed development comprises inappropriate development in the Green Belt that is harmful by definition and furthermore, fails to preserve the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it through encroachment. The development does not meet all of the requirements of NPPF Policy GB7.1(g) or the Golden Rules contained in NPPF Policy GB8 and Very special circumstances do not clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm identified to justify approval. The application is therefore contrary to policies PfE Policy JP-G9 (The Green Belt) and the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 2 The proposed development by reason of it's location immediately adjacent to the M66 motorway would generate unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance that would be detrimental to the amenities of future occupiers of the proposed development. In attempting to mitigate this harm the proposals have required an unacceptable approach to boundary treatments which would create an unattractive and oppressive environment. By reason of its excessive use, prominent siting and bulk across the application site, the proposed timber acoustic fencing to the rear of plots 1 – 18 and 19 – 24 as well as the proposed 1.5m high boundary treatment to the front of plots 19 – 24 create visually incompatible and overbearing features that would not be well designed and would inflict undue visual harm to the character and appearance of the proposed dwellings. The cumulative effect of this noise source and attempted mitigation would result in a significant adverse impact on the living conditions of occupiers through noise, disturbance and loss of residential amenity both internally and externally. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies P3, G9 and DM1 of the adopted Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P1 of the adopted Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and Policy P3 of the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 3 The location of the site would result in a car dependent development. The provision of onsite car parking spaces is insufficient to respond to this site context, and it therefore fails to comply with the PfE Policy JP-C8 NPPF Policy TR4.1(e).

Procedure Statement

- 6 The development does not comply with the development plan and therefore not comprise sustainable development. There were no amendments to scheme, or conditions which could reasonably have been imposed, which have made the development acceptable, and it was therefore not possible to approve the application.

For the avoidance of doubt, the decision relates to the following plans:

- Location Plan Drawing No R-0832-SLP
- Proposed Site Layout Drawing No R-0832 PL19 Rev B
- Flat Plans and Elevations Plots 1-6 Drawing No R-0832 PL20 Rev A
- Elevations and Section Plots 1-6 Drawing No R-0832 PL21 Rev A
- House Plans and Elevations Plots 7-17 Drawing No R-0832 PL22 Rev B
- House Plans and Elevations M4(3) Unit Plot 18 Drawing No R-0832 PL30 Rev A
- House Plans and Elevations Plots 20-23 Drawing No R-0832 PL23 Rev C
- House Plans and Elevations M4(3) Unit Plots 19 and 24 Drawing No R-0832 PL31 Rev A
- Proposed Street Scenes Drawing No R-8032 SK24 Rev A
- External Works Proposals Drawing No R-0832 PL25 Rev B
- Landscaping Proposals Drawing No R-0832 PL26 Rev C
- Site Proposals with New Access Road Drawing No R-0832-PL27
- Site Sections Drawing No R-0832 PL28 Rev A
- Proposed Access Road Drawing No R-0832-16 Rev A
- Planning Statement September 2025
- Principle of Development (Planning Statement Addendum) August 2026
- Proposed Retaining Wall General Arrangement and Sections Drawing No GK4503-C-001 Rev B.
- Design and Access Statement Addendum June 2026 Rev B
- Affordable Housing Statement 2023-012 August 2025
- Flood Risk Assessment and Outline Drainage Strategy Rev E 10th September 2026
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment Referenced NWTCAIA/RG01
- Arboricultural Method Statement Referenced NWTCAMS/RG01
- Tree Survey Referenced NWTCTS/RG01
- Biodiversity Net Gain Plan Rev 2
- Noise Impact Assessment NA103422-RPT01-V2 25th February 2026
- Road Restrain Risk Assessment Process May 2026
- Air Quality Assessment 05 August 2025
- Landscape Appraisal August 2025
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal LAWL/24-001 10th October 2024
- Transport Statement J000540-TS01b August 2025
- River Condition Assessment 31st July 2025
- Transport Supporting Letter J000540/KG 27th April 2026
- Energy Statement Referenced Z69491RevA
- Landscape Addendum Letter Referenced 351/01 dated 9th April 2026