

**APPLICATION REPORT – FUL/352515/24**  
**Planning Committee 17 July 2024**

Registration Date: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024  
Ward: Alexandra

Application Reference: FUL/352515/24  
Type of Application: Full

Proposal: Full application for the erection of a visitor centre, events building, forestry depot, necessary infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, vehicular and cycle parking, and pedestrian movements.

Location: Land at Snipe Clough, Oldham

Case Officer: Graham Dickman  
Applicant: Oldham MBC  
Agent: Richard Purser

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This application is presented to Planning Committee in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation as it relates to a Major application on a site where the applicant and site owner is the Council.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the application is approved subject to the conditions set out at the end of this report.

## **3. SITE DESCRIPTION**

- 3.1 This application relates to the north-eastern corner of the wider overall Northern Roots site which stretches south-east from Alexandra Park and encompasses a mix of flat grassland, sports pitches, heath, boggy wetlands, and dense wooded slopes.
- 3.2 The application site itself presently comprises a mix of woodland and amenity grassland.

## **4. THE PROPOSAL**

- 4.1 The proposal relates to a site which formed part of Phase 1 of the Northern Roots development approved in 2022. Specifically, the area encompassed the visitor centre, events building and forestry hub.
- 4.2 The present application seeks approval for a similar development, but with a revised siting and design.

### Visitor Centre

- 4.3 In respect of siting, the visitor centre building has been relocated to the east of its previously approved position to take account of the site constraints. This results in a prominent, south-facing curved frontage opening out onto an adjacent open, landscaped area.
- 4.4 The building will continue to take a single storey form with a projecting roof to the front and side of the building. Facing materials will primarily include red brick with timber cladding, with a mono-pitch, aluminium, standing seam roof.
- 4.5 It will incorporate a café and multi-use areas which can be subdivided, along with a shop where produce from the adjacent proposed market garden will be sold.

### Events building

- 4.6 The events building and associated outdoor space will be located within the centre of the site. It will allow for a variety of activities, including as a base for outdoor learning in the adjacent woodland. The structure itself will be single storey, but incorporating a tall, pitched roof with facing materials to match those used on the visitor centre.

### Forestry hub

- 4.7 The forestry hub will occupy a similar site to that previously approved in the north-east corner of the site. However, the previously approved two buildings will now be accommodated within a single structure with an ancillary service yard.
- 4.8 The present proposal seeks to amend that design to create a building which is part two-storey and part single storey, including first floor office accommodation and a full height workshop area.

### Environmental Impact Assessment

- 4.9 The application has been assessed in the context of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.
- 4.10 The proposal would represent an Urban Development Project within paragraph 10(b) of Schedule 2 of the Regulations. However, it would not exceed the applicable threshold of 1 hectare of urban development., nor is the site located within any impact distance of a 'sensitive area' as defined in the Regulations.
- 4.11 Consequently, an Environmental Statement is not required.

## **5. PLANNING HISTORY**

- 5.1 RES/352568/24 - Application for approval of all Reserved Matters in respect of Phase A (Upper Market Garden) relating to approved application FUL/348898/22). Also presented for determination on this Committee agenda.
- 5.2 NMA/352338/24 - Non-Material Amendment for the variation of timing for discharge of conditions 7 (waste facilities), 8 (drainage), 9 (sewer protection) and 17 (landscaping) relating to application FUL/348898/22. Approved 27 March 2024
- 5.3 CND/352157/23 - Discharge of Conditions 6 (CEMP), 11 (Bird nesting survey), 18

(Protective tree fencing details), 19 (Invasive species treatment) and 20 (Ecology surveys) relating to Phase A of approved application FUL/348898/22. Part discharge 4 March 2024.

- 5.4 FUL/348898/22 - Hybrid planning application seeking full/part outline consent comprising:, (a) Full application for the erection of a visitor centre, events building with meeting pods, learning centre, forestry depot, ground mounted solar PV array and associated works, relocation of football pitch provision, necessary infrastructure, hard and soft landscaping, site wide vehicular, cycle parking and pedestrian improvements, including car park on Nether Hey Street, and (b) Outline application (all matters reserved except for access) for a community growing allotment and swimming pond. Approved 2nd November 2022.

## **6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES**

- 6.1 The Places for Everyone (PfE) Plan and related documentation took effect and became part of the statutory development plan on 21 March 2024.
- 6.2 The PfE Plan must now be considered in the determination of planning applications, alongside Oldham's Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Development Plan Document (Joint DPD), adopted November 2011, in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 6.3 As such, the following policies are considered relevant to the determination of this application:

Places for Everyone:

- Policy JP-G7 – Trees and Woodlands
- Policy JP-G8 – A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity
- Policy JP-P1 - Sustainable Places
- Policy JP-P5 – Education, Skills and Knowledge
- Policy JP-P7 – Sport and Recreation
- Policy JP-S4 – Flood Risk and the Water Environment

- 6.4 On the Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document adopted in 2011 (the Local Plan), the site is within the Green Belt on the Proposals Map associated with the Local Plan.

- 6.5 The following policies are considered relevant to the determination of this application:

- Policy 1 - Climate Change and Sustainable Development
- Policy 9 - Local Environment
- Policy 21 – Protecting Natural Environmental Assets
- Policy 23 – Open Spaces and Sports

## 7. CONSULTATIONS

Highways Officer	Requires implementation of the proposed access and parking arrangements and the Kings Road/ Honeywell Lane junction improvements prior to occupation of the buildings.
United Utilities	Recommend a condition to require submission of a sustainable drainage system.
G M Ecology Unit	Recommend conditions in relation to protection of wildlife and for Biodiversity Net Gain.
Environmental Health	The submitted desk study is acceptable and a full contamination assessment should be conditioned.
Trees Officer	The proposed tree removal and replacement is acceptable subject to implementation of the proposed tree protection measures.

## 8. PUBLICITY AND THIRD-PARTY REPRESENTATIONS

- 8.1 In accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, and the Council's adopted Statement of Community Involvement, the application has been advertised by means of neighbour notification letters, site notice and press notice. No representations have been received to date.

## ASSESSMENT OF THE PROPOSAL

### 9. PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 9.1 The principle of the development, particularly in the context of the Green Belt location, was considered fully in the assessment of the previously approved Northern Roots development. This is an important material planning consideration.
- 9.2 It is therefore necessary to consider whether, as a result of the proposed revisions, any harm to the Green Belt or other impacts would outweigh the previously identified overall social, economic, and environmental benefits which would accrue from the Northern Roots scheme in its totality. Those benefits include the productive enhancement of an undervalued space on the edge of the urban area within proximity to areas of deprivation.

### 10. LAYOUT AND DESIGN

- 10.1 The proposed visitor centre and events space buildings are located to ensure a close relationship and integration with the wooded landscape of which they will form part. The visitor centre will however have a prominent aspect, albeit against the wooded backdrop.

- 10.2 The prominent, open aspect is a result of the function of the building and the need to integrate to the adjacent meadow and play area and to the growing hub beyond.
- 10.3 In this context, the layout secures a satisfactory relationship with neighbouring uses and the overall function of the Northern Roots site.
- 10.4 The low profile of the building and mix of brickwork and timber for the facings will ensure it can be integrated well into its setting.
- 10.5 The events building and associated spaces are located within the woodland and are therefore less visually prominent. Although the design of this space has evolved, it continues to include a striking profile to integrate it within the wooded setting.
- 10.6 The forestry depot will be prominently sited alongside the access track serving the visitor centre and growing area. It will primarily be faced in anthracite black metal profiled cladding and exhibit a largely functional appearance.
- 10.7 It will therefore have a greater visual impact than the previously approved scheme, albeit still appropriate to its setting and function.
- 10.8 Having regard to the approved principle of the development and its various features on this site, the siting and design of the scheme is acceptable.

## **11. TREES AND ECOLOGY**

- 11.1 As noted above, the natural surroundings are an integral part of the proposed visitor centre and events spaces and the buildings have been designed and sited so they can be integrated into the setting.
- 11.2 Nevertheless, the development will result in the need to remove, partly or fully, 3 trees and 12 groups of trees. In compensation, it is proposed to plant 165 new semi-mature, extra heavy standard and bare root trees as well as native shrub and hedgerow planting.
- 11.3 The Trees Officer is satisfied that this would provide appropriate compensation in accordance with the Council's standards.
- 11.4 The development, as a FULL application submitted following the introduction of statutory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain, the applicant is required to demonstrate that a 10% net gain in biodiversity can be achieved.
- 11.5 GM Ecology Unit has confirmed that it is satisfied that appropriate arrangements can be secured on land available to the applicant elsewhere on the Northern Roots site to ensure compliance with the statutory duty and this will be required as a condition on the decision notice requiring a biodiversity net gain plan and habitat management and monitoring plan.

## **12. HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

- 12.1 The application incorporates access and parking arrangements to service the proposed buildings. This includes parking spaces located alongside the access road towards the site.

- 12.2 In addition, the buildings will be linked via new footpath routes to additional, re-designed parking spaces off Kings Road.
- 12.3 Reconfiguration of the highway in the vicinity of the Kings Road Honeywell Lane junction is proposed in line with the condition discharge requirements of the overall Northern Roots approval. Similarly, these works will be required to be implemented before the buildings are brought into use.

### **13. DRAINAGE AND GROUND CONDITIONS**

- 13.1 A drainage scheme has been submitted with the application. United Utilities has requested further details in relation to proposed levels, an indicative drainage strategy, and information to assess any risk of sewer discharge. This will be included as a condition of the approval.
- 13.2 The application is accompanied by Phase 1 Geo-environmental Reports.
- 13.3 The Environmental Health team has considered these documents and does not foresee any impediments to the proposed development. Nevertheless, conditions are recommended in relation to the need for subsequent full site investigation and assessment, and for implementation of any identified remedial measures.

### **14. CONCLUSION**

- 14.1 The proposal involves a variation to a development for which planning permission has recently been granted. Following an assessment of the changes to the details, it is evident that any impacts do not materially differ from those addressed on the previous scheme.
- 14.2 Consequently, subject to the conditions below, the application is recommended for approval.

### **15. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

1. Development comprising any part of the FULL application must be begun not later than the expiry of THREE years beginning with the date of this permission. REASON - To comply with the provisions of Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
2. The development hereby approved shall be fully implemented in accordance with the Approved Details Schedule list on this decision notice. REASON - For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and specifications.
3. No development comprising the erection of the external walls or roof of any individual building hereby approved shall take place until a specification for the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of that building have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The materials to be used throughout the development shall be consistent in terms of colour, size and texture with the approved details. REASON - To ensure that the appearance of the

development is acceptable in the interests of the visual amenity of the area having regard to Policy 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.

4. No development hereby approved as indicated on plan ref : NRO-PLA-ZO-XX-DR-L-000004 P16 shall be brought into operation until the car parking spaces and associated vehicular and footpath access as indicated on the approved plans has been provided in accordance with the details of construction, levels, and drainage, which shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of the construction of the accesses and parking spaces. Thereafter the parking spaces shall not be used for any purpose other than the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles. REASON - To ensure adequate off-street parking facilities are provided and remain available for the development so that parking does not take place on the highway to the detriment of highway safety having regard to Policies 5 and 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.
5. No development comprising the construction of a building shall be commenced until a scheme in the form of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), including details of construction vehicle access routes, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include details for the methods to be employed to control and monitor noise, dust, and vibration impacts. The approved scheme shall be implemented to the full written satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority before the construction works are commenced, which shall be maintained for the duration of the construction works. REASON - To safeguard the amenities of the adjoining premises and the area having regard to Policy 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.
6. No building hereby approved shall be occupied until facilities for the storage and removal of refuse and waste materials have been provided in accordance with a scheme which has previously been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be retained thereafter. REASON - To protect the amenity of the area having regard to Policy 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.
7. No development (other than site clearance, site investigations, remediation and enabling works) shall be commenced until details of a sustainable surface water drainage scheme and a foul water drainage scheme has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage schemes must include:
  - i. An investigation of the hierarchy of drainage options in the National Planning Practice
  - ii. Guidance (or any subsequent amendment thereof). This investigation shall include evidence of an assessment of ground conditions and the potential for infiltration of surface water in accordance with BRE365;
  - iii. A restricted rate of discharge of surface water agreed with the local planning authority (if it is agreed that infiltration is discounted by the investigations);
  - iv. Levels of the proposed drainage systems including proposed ground and finished floor levels in AOD;
  - v. Incorporate mitigation measures to manage the risk of sewer surcharge where applicable; and,
  - vi. Foul and surface water shall drain on separate systems.

The approved schemes shall also be in accordance with the Non-Statutory Technical Standards for Sustainable Drainage Systems (March 2015) or any subsequent replacement national standards.

Prior to occupation of any building, the drainage schemes shall be completed in accordance with the approved details and retained thereafter for the lifetime of the development. REASON - To promote sustainable development, secure proper drainage and to manage the risk of flooding and pollution having regard to Policy JP-S4 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Document.

8. No development (other than site clearance, site investigations, remediation and enabling works) shall commence until details of the means of ensuring the water mains and public sewers that are laid within the site boundary are protected from damage as a result of the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details shall include a survey that identifies the exact location of the water mains and public sewers, the potential impacts on the water mains and public sewers from construction activities (including the construction compound), the impacts post completion of the development on the sewer infrastructure that crosses the site and identify mitigation measures, including a timetable for implementation, to protect and prevent any damage to the sewers both during construction and post completion of the development. The details shall include a pre and post construction condition survey of water mains and public sewers within the red line boundary. Any mitigation measures shall be implemented in full in accordance with the approved details and timetable for implementation and shall be retained thereafter for the lifetime of the development. REASON - To protect drainage infrastructure, to secure proper drainage and to manage the risk of flooding and pollution having regard to Policy JP-S4 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Document.
9. No building hereby approved shall be brought into use until a sustainable drainage management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The sustainable drainage management and maintenance plan shall include as a minimum:
  - a. Arrangements for adoption by an appropriate public body or statutory undertaker, or, management and maintenance by a resident's management company; and
  - b. Arrangements for inspection and ongoing maintenance of all elements of the sustainable drainage system to secure the operation of the surface water drainage scheme throughout its lifetime.

The development shall subsequently be completed, maintained and managed in accordance with the approved scheme. REASON - To promote sustainable development, secure proper drainage and to manage the risk of flooding and pollution having regard to Policy JP-S4 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Document.

10. No works to trees or shrubs shall take place between the 1st March and 31st August in any year unless a detailed bird nest survey by a suitably experienced ecologist has been carried out immediately prior to clearance and written confirmation provided that no active bird nests are present which has been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. REASON - To ensure the protection of bird habitats, which are protected species under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, having regard to Policy 21 of the Oldham Local Plan.
11. The visitor centre and forestry skills buildings shall be constructed to ensure consistency with Part L of the 2022 Building Regulations, or any superseding

Regulations in force at the time of construction. REASON - In order to secure a sustainable form of development having regard to Policy JP-S2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan.

12. No development (other than site clearance) shall be commenced until a site investigation and assessment into landfill gas risk and ground contamination, including any historic gas mining legacy features, has been carried out and the consultant's written report and recommendation have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. In order to fully discharge the condition, the written approval from the Local Planning Authority will be required for any necessary programmed remedial measures and to confirm that the site has been made safe and stable for the development. REASON - In order to protect public safety having regard to Policy 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.
13. No building hereby approved shall be brought into use until the landscaping scheme as indicated on plan ref: NRO-PLA-ZO-XX-DR-L-002000 Rev P08 has been implemented in accordance with a timetable to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. All planting shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details in the first available planting season following the completion of the development, or such longer period which has previously been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be maintained for a period of 5 years from the agreed date of planting. Any trees or plants which die, become diseased, or are removed during the maintenance period shall be replaced with specimens of an equivalent species and size. REASON - To ensure that the development site is landscaped to an acceptable standard having regard to Policy JP-G7 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Document.
14. The development shall be implemented fully in accordance with the measures as set out in the Invasive Non-native Species Method Statement Ref: 10200.01.001 Version 3.0 dated November 2023. REASON - To prevent the spread of invasive plant species having regard to Policy 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.
15. The development shall be implemented fully in accordance with the measures as set out in the Reasonable Avoidance Measures Method Statement Ref: 10200.02.004 Version 2.0, Section 8 of the Ground Level Tree Assessment Ref: 10200.02.002 Version 2.0, and Sections 6 and 7 of the Protected Species Report: Badgers Ref: 10200.02.003 Version 3.0. REASON - To ensure the protection of protected species having regard to Policy 21 of the Oldham Local Plan.
16. Any external lighting associated with the development shall be implemented in accordance with the measures as set out in the submitted Environmental Light Assessment (March 2024). REASON - To protect the amenity of the area and minimise any impact on the natural environment regard to Policies 9 and 21 of the Oldham Local Plan.
17. The use of the Visitor Centre shall not commence until a highway improvement scheme, in accordance with details which have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, has been carried out at the junction of the access road to the development and its junction with Kings Road and Honeywell Lane. The improvement will include narrowing the carriageway, providing pedestrian and cycle infrastructure on Kings Road and the access road, and improving access at Kings Road/ Honeywell Lane including the highway leading to and in front of 256-272 Honeywell Lane. All works that form part of the approved scheme to be retained thereafter. REASON - In the interest of the safety of all users of the site having regard to Policies 5 and 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.

18. Within three months of the first occupation of any part of the development, a travel plan for that part shall be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. The approved travel plans for each part shall be implemented within a further three months of the written approval of the Local Planning Authority. REASON - In order to promote sustainable means of travel having regard to Policies 5 and 9 of the Oldham Local Plan.

**SITE LOCATION PLAN (NOT TO SCALE)**

