

PLANNING STATEMENT

Siting of 5 external temporary cabins for
The College of Rugby at Sedgley Rugby
Club training ground, Whitefield, Bury.

MPD Built
Environment
Consultants Ltd

Planning Statement (inc Green Belt Assessment)

for 5 external temporary cabins for The College of Rugby at
Sedgley Rugby Club training ground, Whitefield, Bury

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Planning Statement accompanies the application for the siting of five external temporary cabins for The College of Rugby at Sedgley Rugby Club training ground, Whitefield, Bury.
- 1.2. It explains the concept and principles of the proposed development in relation to Green Belt Policy. It also examines how the proposal accords with relevant National and Local Planning Policy and other material planning policy considerations.
- 1.3. This document is divided into five sections and has the relevant information included on the context of the site, the proposed development, planning history, planning policy context, appraisal and conclusions.
- 1.4. In addition, the Planning Statement is supported by the application submissions sent electronically via the Planning Portal.

2. Site context

- 2.1 The application site is located in between the M60 running to the south and the urban settlement of Park Lane, running to the north. The site is heavily influenced by these two features, forming part of a transition landscape where signs of urban development, such as allotments, outbuildings, access roads and other structures are present nearby.
- 2.2 The site is characterised by its extensive green space and natural landscapes, which serve as a buffer between the densely built-up urban area and the open countryside. The surroundings include a mix of dense woodlands, open fields, and recreational areas. The site itself forms part of a playing field surrounded by an access road.

3. Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment 2016

3.1 The Greater Manchester Green Belt Assessment Report Prepared by LUC July 2016 aimed to assess the extent to which the land within the Greater Manchester Green Belt performs against the purposes of Green Belts, as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

- Purpose 1a to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- Purpose 1b to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- Purpose 2 to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- Purpose 3 to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- Purpose 4 to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.2 The Study does not advise on the suitability or potential of land in Great Manchester for development. It also does not consider whether 'exceptional circumstances' exist or make any recommendations relating to the alteration or review of Green Belt boundaries. However, it does provide with an objective, evidence-based and independent assessment of how Manchester's Green Belt contributes to the five purposes of Green Belt, as set out in national policy and is therefore a useful consideration for the purposes of this statement.

3.3 The site is located in parcel BU48, with the following ratings:

- Purpose 1a – strong (Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel contains no or very limited urban sprawl and has a strong sense of openness.)
- Purpose 1b – moderate (Adjacent to large built-up area and land parcel has moderate potential for urban sprawl to occur.)
- Purpose 2 – weak (The parcel plays a very limited role in preventing the merging or erosion of the visual or physical gap between settlements. Loss of openness would not be perceived as reducing gap between settlements.)
- Purpose 3 – moderate (The land parcel contains the characteristics of countryside, has limited urbanising development, and is relatively open).
- Purpose 4 – moderate (The parcel plays a moderate role in the setting of historic towns in terms of its physical extent and degree of visibility and/or its contribution to special character).

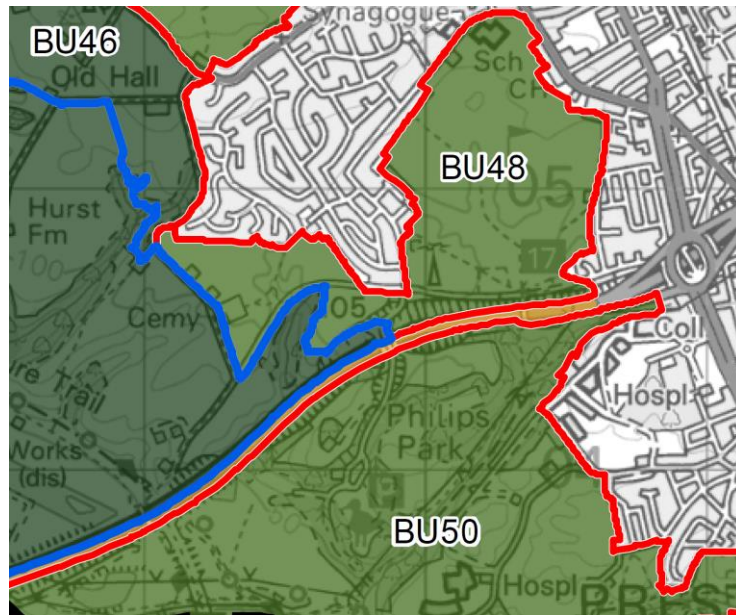


Fig 1 - Land parcels within the Green Belt

4. Proposal

- 4.1 The development will consist of five porta cabins, each measuring approximately 6m by 5m and standing at a height of 2.8m. These cabins will be converted to accommodate two classrooms, a gym, a kitchenette, and W/C facilities.
- 4.2 There will be no permanent foundations. The cabins will be sat on levelling pads, on compacted hardcore/gravel. All will be removable once the cabins are finished with, and the land will be put back to its original state.
- 4.3 The proposed plan involves connecting the cabins to the existing electrical services, utilising the available power source. No extra service routes from Phillips Park Road will be necessary for this implementation.
- 4.4 The management of toilet waste in the cabins will be facilitated through a standalone septic tank, ensuring an off-grid and self-contained system. The tank will be hidden into the ground or covered by a timber fence if above ground.

5. Key Planning Policy

5.1 National Planning Policy

- 5.1.1 The new National Planning Policy Framework was revised in December 2023 and the following paragraphs are considered to be relevant.
- 5.1.2 Paragraph 38 confirms that Local Planning Authorities should approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way. They should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the area. Decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.1.3 Paragraph 47 confirms that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework must be taken into account in preparing the Development Plan and is a material consideration in planning decisions. This paragraph also states that decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales, unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.
- 5.1.4 Paragraph 55 advises that Local Planning Authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions.
- 5.1.5 Paragraph 56 advises that planning conditions should be kept to a minimum and only imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise, and reasonable in all other respects. Conditions that are required to be discharged before development commences should be avoided.

Green Belt

- 5.1.6 Paragraph 142 states that the government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.
- 5.1.7 Paragraph 143 states that Green Belt serves 5 purposes:
 - a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 5.1.8 Paragraph 152 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.
- 5.1.9 Paragraph 153 states that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. '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.

5.1.10 Paragraph 154 states that a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this are:

- a) buildings for agriculture and forestry;
- b) the provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use) for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments; as long as the facilities preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
- c) the extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building;
- d) the replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- e) limited infilling in villages;
- f) limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan (including policies for rural exception sites); and
- g) limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of previously developed land, whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would:
 - not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt than the existing development; or
 - not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt, where the development would re-use previously developed land and contribute to meeting an identified affordable housing need within the area of the local planning authority.

5.1.11 Paragraph 155 states that certain other forms of development are also not inappropriate in the Green Belt provided they preserve its openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it. These are:

- a) mineral extraction;
- b) engineering operations;
- c) local transport infrastructure which can demonstrate a requirement for a Green Belt location;
- d) the re-use of buildings provided that the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction;
- e) material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and
- f) development, including buildings, brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order.

5.2 Local Planning Policy

Bury Unitary Development Plan

5.2.1 Policy OL1/2 - New Buildings in the Green Belt states that the construction of new buildings inside the Green Belt is inappropriate development, unless it is for one or more of the following purposes:

- agriculture and forestry (except where permitted development rights have been withdrawn);
- essential facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, for cemeteries, and for other uses of land which preserve the openness of Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it;
- limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings, provided that this would not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling, or, in the case of replacement of existing dwellings, the new dwelling is not materially larger than the one it replaces;
- limited infilling in existing villages as set out under Policy OL1/3.

5.2.2 The potentially acceptable categories of development listed in the policy all possess at least one of the following characteristics. They would:

- have a low proportion of building area in relation to land area; or
- would not injure the visual amenities of the Green Belt or be conspicuous from or within the Green Belt; or
- be essential or traditional countryside uses; or
- help to secure the proper management of Green Belt land.

5.2.3 In relation to the purposes for which new buildings may be permitted, (see a) to d) above in the policy), the following considerations will apply:

- i. Essential facilities, see b) in Policy OL1/2, should be genuinely required for uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. Possible examples of such facilities include small changing rooms or unobtrusive spectator accommodation for outdoor sport, or small stables for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation.
- ii. The extension or alteration of dwellings in the Green Belt, see c) in Policy OL1/2, need not be inappropriate providing that any changes are not disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. Such proposals should have regard to any supplementary planning guidance issued by the Council. Any such supplementary planning guidance will be issued solely for the guidance of applicants and will be consistent with the Plan and subject to Council approval. Where appropriate, public consultation will be carried out.

Places For Everyone Joint Development Plan Document 2024

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

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

5.2.5 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.

6 Appraisal

6.1 Appropriateness of development in the context of the NPPF and the Unitary Development Plan

- 6.1.1 The development is consistent with Paragraph 38 of the NPPF, which encourages local planning authorities to approach decisions on proposed developments positively and proactively. The proposal aims to improve the educational and recreational facilities available, enhancing the economic, social, and environmental conditions of the area.
- 6.1.2 Paragraph 154 of the NPPF states that the construction of new buildings is inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Exceptions to this include the provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation provided it preserves the openness and does not conflict with the Green Belt's purposes. The Bury UDP Policy OL1/2 also states that new buildings in the Green Belt are inappropriate unless they serve specific purposes such as outdoor sport and recreation.
- 6.1.3 The proposal to site five temporary external cabins at the Sedgley Rugby Club training ground for The College of Rugby aims to significantly enhance leisure, outdoor sport, recreation, and community engagement within the area.
- 6.1.4 The College of Rugby (TCOR) provides extensive sports programmes for young people, including professional coaching and officiation training in rugby. The temporary cabins will facilitate a mixed-use environment for classroom learning, gym activities, and outdoor sports, promoting a well-rounded recreational experience for the students. TCOR students also run sports and rugby experience programs for all primary and secondary schools in the borough. The students also host and manage schools' rugby activities and tournaments for the Schools Games Organisers and Bury MBC.
- 6.1.5 The cabins will be used to deliver courses and qualifications in various aspects of rugby, including coaching, refereeing, and first aid. This will enhance the existing recreational facilities at Sedgley Rugby Club, offering more structured and professional training opportunities.
- 6.1.6 Through partnerships with organisations like YMCA, CIMSPA and TryIt Rugby, the proposal will introduce new physical activities such as Walking Rugby and Mixed Abilities sessions, which are designed to engage broader segments of the community, including those with different physical capabilities. With YMCA and CIMSPA the College also provides apprenticeship opportunities to young people in the borough.
- 6.1.7 The above activities are directly related to outdoor sport and outdoor recreation and therefore the proposals meet the provisions of the NPPF and UDP are not considered to be inappropriate development.
- 6.1.8 In addition, the cabins are very minor in size, representing a low proportion of building area in relation to land area; and as argued below, would not injure the spatial and visual amenities of the Green Belt or be conspicuous from or within the Green Belt.

- 6.1.9 Finally, the cabins fall under the category of essential facilities in Policy OL1/2 of the UDP, genuinely required for uses of land which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in it. The Policy cites possible examples of such facilities as including small changing rooms or unobtrusive spectator accommodation for outdoor sport, or small stables for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation, which directly correlate with the development proposed. 3.2 Moreover, the proximity of the main club stadium, equipped with full fibre broadband, offers a viable alternative for any digital requirements that may arise during the activities conducted within the porta cabins.

6.2 Compliance with the five purposes of the Green Belt

- 6.2.1 The proposed development complies with the five purposes of the Green Belt listed in Paragraph 143 of the NPPF and Policy JP-G9 of the Places For Everyone Joint Development Plan Document. In addition, as mentioned above the proposal would deliver social benefits for the surrounding residents. A summary assessment is presented below:
- 6.2.2 To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas: The site is within a designated Green Belt area, and the proposal does not contribute to urban sprawl. The cabins are temporary in nature, very minor in scale and footprint and will not encourage further development. The proposed development will therefore not lead to unrestricted sprawl of the adjacent built-up area.
- 6.2.3 To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another: The development is located within an existing recreational ground and does not contribute to the merging of towns. The presence of the M60 motorway to the south acts as a physical barrier, maintaining clear separation between urban areas and the woodland areas assist with containment and enclosure.
- 6.2.4 To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment: The cabins are temporary structures and will not permanently alter the landscape. Their placement within the confines of the rugby club's grounds ensures no encroachment into the surrounding countryside.
- 6.2.5 To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns: The site does not affect any historic towns, and the proposal maintains the recreational use of the land, which is in keeping with the character of the area.
- 6.2.6 To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land: While the proposal does not directly contribute to urban regeneration, it supports the efficient use of existing recreational land, indirectly aligning with the principle of optimising land use.

6.3 Impact upon the spatial and visual openness of the Green Belt

- 6.3.1 When considering the harm to openness, the PPG sets out that the assessment of a proposal on the openness of the Green Belt requires a judgement based on the circumstances of the case. It states that the courts have identified a number of matters which may need to be taken into account in making this assessment, which include, but are not limited to the spatial and visual aspects of development and the degree of activity.

- 6.3.2 The proposed cabins will be sited to the edge of an existing playing field, near the edge with the surrounding woodland, and encompass a small overall size and footprint, ensuring that the spatial openness of the Green Belt is preserved. The design involves no permanent foundations, with the cabins being placed on compacted hardcore/gravel. This temporary setup ensures that the land can be restored to its original state, thereby preserving the spatial openness of the Green Belt. The careful placement of the cabins within the site's existing layout minimises any potential encroachment on open space.
- 6.3.3 The visual impact of the development is minimal due to the temporary and non-intrusive nature of the cabins. The cabins are designed to blend into the existing environment with minimal visual disruption. The site is surrounded by woodlands and other natural features that act as visual buffers, reducing the visual impact on the surrounding areas. The design includes standalone services, such as a septic tank for waste management, which are concealed or covered to maintain the aesthetic integrity of the site. The temporary nature of the proposed cabins ensures minimal long-term impact on the Green Belt by maintaining the recreational use of the site and ensuring no permanent alteration to the landscape. The impact upon the Green Belt's visual openness is therefore minimal.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposed development accords with the Green Belt policy objectives of the Development Plan and the NPPF. The proposal doesn't constitute inappropriate development in the context of the NPPF and Policy OL1/2 of the Unitary Development Plan and it complies with the five purposes of the Green Belt listed in Paragraph 143 of the NPPF and Policy JP-G9 whilst safeguarding spatial and visual openness.
- 7.2 Planning Permission should therefore be granted for this proposal having regard to the considerations outlined in this statement.