

**Land at Manchester Road, Walmersley BL6 9LJ**  
**Permission in Principle, (Stage 1) for housing development**  
Grid Reference 380133; 415415

**Planning statement**

Reference JM.010425.A



**September 2025**  
**Prepared by Hartley Planning and Development Associates Ltd**  
Amended 240925

## **Permission in principle**

Permission in principle (PIP) is a way of obtaining planning permission for housing- led development where the consideration of matters of principle are separated from subsequent technical details.

### Procedures

PIP has 2 stages. Stage 1 establishes whether a site is suitable in principle and a Stage 2 (technical details) application legally until both Stages 1 and 2 have been approved.

### Requirements for a stage one application.

The following information must be provided:

- completed application form.
- a plan to identify the land and
- the correct application fee.

The LPA, when assessing the Stage 1 application is limited to **considering location, land use and the proposed amount of development**. Other matters are to be dealt with at the technical details stage. Thus, LPAs cannot require at Stage many of the matters that might be required for an outline or full planning application such as contamination reports, ecological assessments, arboricultural advice, Statements of community involvement and the many other studies and reports which increasingly are demanded.

The LPA has 5 weeks within which to make a decision unless a longer period of time has been agreed in writing with the applicant.

### Implementation period

When a Stage 1 permission is granted, an applicant has a further 3 years to apply for Stage 2 technical details. Where PIP is granted through an allocation onto its brownfield land register the duration is 5 years.

### **The proposed site (location)**

The application site is located on land off Manchester Road, Walmersley, in the vicinity of . the Halfway House Café and to the North of Bass Lane.

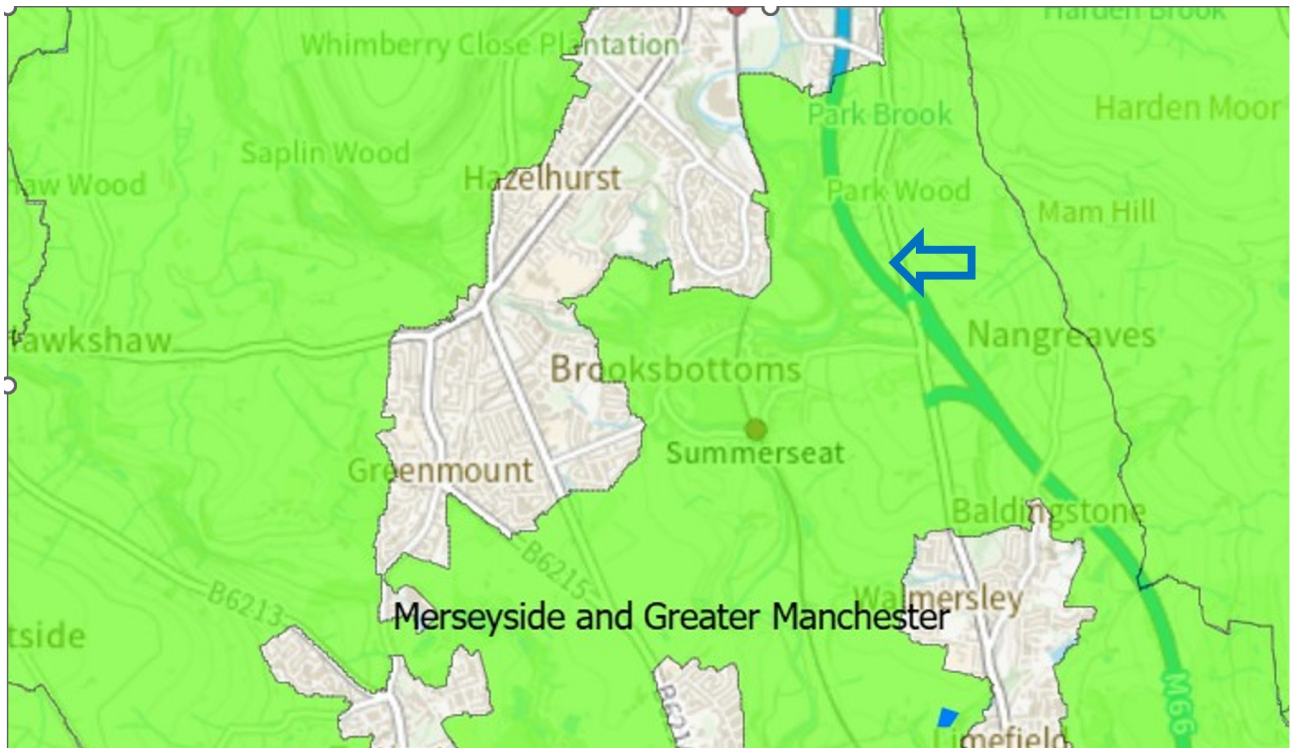
### **Amount**

The proposal is to develop the area of approximately 0.26 hectares for between 7 and 9

dwelling. This would permit the development of the area with houses with a comparable size to those in the immediate area.

### **Main Land use issues**

The site (marked in blue on the following plan) lies within the Green Belt



Its use for housing would be compatible with the adjoining uses which include residential; development and the Red Hall opposite and a mixed use including the detached Halfway House café to the North.

The other main issues are (i) whether the site is suitable for residential development having regard to (i) its location in the Green Belt, (ii) the proposed and surrounding land uses and (iii) the amount of development.

### ***Location in the Green Belt and whether it would be inappropriate development***

Policy JP-G9 of the Greater Manchester Places for Everyone 2024 (PfE) refers to the Green Belt but says little about applicable and related land use limitations and planning policy, concentrating instead upon how accessibility to it for public benefit might be

improved

The National Planning Policy Framework 2025 (the Framework), which is a material planning consideration, notes at paragraph 154 that development in the Green Belt is inappropriate, subject to specified exceptions.

One such exception is outlined in paragraphs 155 as follows and which refer to 'grey belt' land: -

*'155. The development of homes, commercial and other development in the Green Belt should also not be regarded as inappropriate where:*

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework; and*
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the 'Golden Rules' requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157 below.*

Paragraph 156 of the Framework imposes 'golden rules' for 'major' development on grey belt land. Major development is defined in the Framework, for as 10 or more houses or where the site is greater than 0.5 ha. Such requirements would apply in the case of the current application above the minimum stated number of 25 houses.

Grey Belt Land is defined in Annex 2 to the Framework as follows: -

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

NB. Footnote 7, which defines areas which are excluded from the definition of grey belt land, do not apply in this case. Such areas include habitats sites (and those sites listed in paragraph 194) and/or designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest; Local Green

Space, a National Landscape, a National Park (or within the Broads Authority) or defined as Heritage Coast; irreplaceable habitats; designated heritage assets (and other heritage assets of archaeological interest referred to in footnote 75); and areas at risk of flooding or coastal change.

#### The application site in relation to the definition of 'grey belt' land

In order to meet the definition, the site must not 'strongly contribute to any of the purposes (a), (b), or (d) of the Green Belt as defined in paragraph 143 of the Framework.

These purposes are stated as follows in the Framework: -

- 'a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas*
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another*
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns'.*

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) (Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 64-005-20250225) contains advice on how these matters might be assessed.

#### ***'Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas***

*This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built-up areas. Villages should not be considered large built-up areas.*

#### **Contribution   Illustrative features**

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|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Strong</b> | <i>Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development, and lack physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development.<br/>They are also likely to include all of the following features:<br/>- be adjacent or near to a large built up area<br/>- if developed, result in an incongruous pattern of development (such as an extended "finger" of development into the Green Belt)</i> |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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## **Contribution     Illustrative features**

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*Moderate*                      *Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be adjacent or near to a large built up area, but include one or more features that weaken the land's contribution to this purpose a, such as (but not limited to):*

- having physical feature(s) in reasonable proximity that could restrict and contain development*
- be partially enclosed by existing development, such that new development would not result in an incongruous pattern of development*
- contain existing development*
- being subject to other urbanising influences*

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*Weak or None*                      *Assessment areas that make only a weak or no contribution are likely to include those that:*

- are not adjacent to or near to a large built up area*
- are adjacent to or near to a large built up area, but containing or being largely enclosed by significant existing development'*

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In this case, the application site cannot be said to be near to a large built-up area. It is an area of land where existing features, including development to the North and where highways to the other sides restrict and contain development beyond the application site. It is essentially an infill site with an urban character.

For these reasons, the application site makes only a weak contribution to the checking of the unrestricted sprawl of a large built up area.

### ***'Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another***

*This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages.*

## **Contribution     Illustrative Features**

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**Strong**                      *Assessment areas that contribute strongly are likely to be free of existing development and include all of the following features:*

- forming a substantial part of a gap between towns*
- the development of which would be likely to result in the loss of visual separation of towns*

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**Moderate**                      *Assessment areas that contribute moderately are likely to be located in a gap between towns, but include one or more features that weaken their contribution to this purpose, such as (but not limited to):*

- forming a small part of the gap between towns*
- being able to be developed without the loss of visual separation between towns. This could be (but is not limited to) due to the presence or the close proximity of structures, natural landscape elements or topography that preserve visual separation*

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**Weak or None**                      *Assessment areas that contribute weakly are likely to include those that:*

- do not form part of a gap between towns, or*
- form part of a gap between towns, but only a very small part of this gap, without making a contribution to visual separation'*

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The site forms only a tiny part of the gap between Bury and Ramsbottom and Rawtenstall, and by its size and its location, contained by adjoining roads and next to other development, it makes a very limited contribution to visual separation.

Therefore, its contribution to the prevention of Bury and Ramsbottom merging together is weak.

***Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns***

*This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.*

In this instance, the site makes no such contribution.

### **Conclusion upon the purposes of the Green Belt (a, b and d) and the classification of the application site as grey belt.**

The application site makes only a weak contribution to the checking of an unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area, and it also makes only a weak contribution to the prevention of the merging of Bury and Ramsbottom/Rawtenstall. It makes no contribution to the preservation of the setting and special character of a historic town.

Therefore, we conclude that the application site is grey belt land, and as such it meets one of the exceptions to Green Belt policy as stated in paragraph 155 (a) of the Framework: -

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

- a. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;*
- b. There is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed;*
- c. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of this Framework and*
- d. Where applicable the development proposed meets the ‘Golden Rules’ requirements set out in paragraphs 156-157*

### **Sustainable location**

The Framework, as stated above, indicates that the proposed development of grey belt land should not be regarded as inappropriate if it is in a sustainable location, with particular reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the Framework.

Paragraph 110 states that *‘significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine*

*choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health. However, opportunities to maximise sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas, and this should be taken into account in both plan-making and decision-making’.*

Paragraph 115 states that: -

*In assessing sites that may be allocated for development in plans, or specific applications for development, it should be ensured that:*

- (a) sustainable transport modes are prioritised taking account of the vision for the site, the type of development and its location;*
- (b) safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users;*
- (c) the design of streets, parking areas, other transport elements and the content of associated standards reflects current national guidance, including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code<sup>48</sup>; and*
- (d) any significant impacts from the development on the transport network (in terms of capacity and congestion), or on highway safety, can be cost effectively mitigated to an acceptable degree through a vision-led approach.*

The site adjoins Manchester Road and as the proposed number of dwellings is limited, there would be minimal impact upon the transport network in terms of capacity and congestion.

There is a regular bus service on Manchester Road.

Therefore, we conclude that the site is sustainably located and that safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users.

### **Demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed**

Paragraph 155 of the Framework also states that development on grey belt land should not be considered to be inappropriate where there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed.

Its footnote No 56 states that ‘ *which, 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 Tests was below 75% of the housing requirement over the previous three years.*

Thus, there is an unmet need if the Council cannot demonstrate a minimum 5-year a deliverable supply of housing land, or else if the number of completed dwellings is deemed to be insufficient according to the Housing Delivery Test which applies to it.

In March 2025 the Council produced its 'Bury Five Year Supply of Deliverable Housing Land. 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2029. (Copy submitted with the application).

It concludes that it can demonstrate a housing supply of 5.8 years.

However, it concedes that it is not meeting its target for the number of completed new dwellings, and which has to be assessed over a 3-year period.

The report concludes that for the latest available period including 2020-21, 2021-22 and 2022-23 (published in December 2024), the Council has met only 64% of its target as required in its Housing Delivery Test. The report includes a forecast of how things might look when the next figures are published, but even then, the estimate is that the Council will only meet 76% of its target. It is also just a forecast

Therefore, we conclude that there is a demonstrable unmet need for the type of development proposed and that the requirement of paragraph 155 (b) is also met.

## **Golden Rules**

For defined 'major' applications, the Framework requires that its 'Golden Rules' will apply if approval is granted for housing in the Green Belt.

However, the application is not included within the definition of a major application.

## ***Conclusion on Green Belt policy***

The relevant criteria in paragraph 155 are satisfied and thus the proposal would not constitute inappropriate development. As such, it should not be regarded as harmful either to the openness of the Green Belt or to the purposes of including land within.

## Other Matters concerned with Land use

As the Council's Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing has been substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years, paragraph 11(d) of the Framework is engaged as it is therefore considered that its housing policies are out of date, and which states that: -

*' For decision-taking this means:*

*d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:*

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

There are no protected areas or assets of particular importance which would provide a strong reason for refusing the development proposed

When considering any other impacts, we have taken into account the possible impact upon the character and appearance of the area.

The proposed development would occupy an area with existing development to the north and with highways to its other sides.. The proposed development, in land use terms would 'round off the existing development and largely within clearly defined limits.

In such circumstances, the proposed development cannot be said to '*significantly and demonstrably*' outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.

## Overall Conclusion

The proposed development would utilise grey belt land and would not amount to

inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

The application site is sustainably located and there is a demonstrable need for the proposed development

There are no adverse impacts which significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the proposed development.

The proposal would not conflict with the development plan when read as a whole and would accord with the guidance set out in the Framework

Therefore, we consider that the application should be supported.