

CHAPTER 14: URBAN GREENSPACE

G/UG/1 (Part One Policy): Urban Greenspace

Objection: 98/27 Countryside Agency North West

Key Issue:

- **should the heading to the policy reflect the relevance of greenspace in rural as well as urban areas?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.1 It should - for the following reasons. The chapter is headed “**URBAN GREENSPACE**”, as is this policy - yet the policy wording itself draws no distinction between an urban as opposed to a rural area. Neither, as a matter of principle, does the reasoned justification. Here, I note the Council's view that, outside the urban area, settlements are small - limiting demand for additional greenspace. It would be unreasonable of me, however, to conclude that greenspace is an exclusive prerogative of urban areas - not least as Policy UG/10 (albeit relating to incidental urban greenspace) deals with small areas of greenspace that, in my opinion, may be equally relevant to the quality of life in rural as well as urban areas. In pursuing this policy, the Council would be likely to disadvantage rural residents. Further, the heading to this chapter and this policy are inconsistent with other policies. The latter are, generally, worded to be Borough-wide in their application - not generally distinguishing between urban and rural - though, again, UG/10 relates to urban amenity open space. The inconsistency would be likely to result in uncertainty in the implementation of the plan. In my view, the Council's reasonable wish to provide adequate greenspace in areas of highest need (urban areas) would not be prejudiced by a change to chapter and policy heading, this reflecting the needs of rural residents. There would, however, be a further implication. The policies are prefixed “UG”. Taking into account the above, I see no reason why they should not be prefixed “G”. Similarly, the remainder of the plan should be edited to amend any references to “UG” policies.

Recommendations:

14.2 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **Delete the heading to the chapter and policy and substitute “GREENSPACE”.**
- **All policies in the chapter should be prefixed “G” rather than “UG”, the rest of the UDP being edited accordingly.**

UG/3 – Protection of Existing Recreational Open Space

Objections:	52/2	Mr Roberts
	55/1	Mr K Thomas
	95/1	Mr L Seaton
	96/1	Mr L Roberts
	161/1	Mr J Gorman
	205/203	Mr W Sheerin
	215/7	Sport England
	215/201	Sport England
	431/1	Rochdale Rugby Union Football Club
	439/2	Castleton EC Residents Association
	441/6	Mr J Kay
	472/202	Cllr P A Flynn

Key Issues:

- does the policy reflect national planning guidance in PPG 17?
- should the sites identified be added to, reduced, deleted or their use restricted?

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.3 Dealing, firstly, with **Sport England**, these are Deposit Draft and Revised Deposit Draft objections - both arguing, generally, for consistency with Sport England's advice and national planning guidance. As to the 2 objections, little detailed information is given to me by the objector on its requirements. Nonetheless, Policy UG/3 seeks to protect recreational open space - this reasonably including playing fields. That, broadly reflects the general intent of PPG 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation. Criteria a) and c), together with d) at its reasoned justification, are acceptable.

14.4 As to land at the **rear of Hereford Way** allocated under UG/3 (Roberts, Thomas, Seaton and Gorman), I have dealt with objections to the Middleton Cemetery extension at Chapter 13. This objection site is currently used for informal recreation and the objections generally indicate support for its continued use to that end. I share the view of the Council that the land is inappropriate for formal sporting activities, best undertaken on formal playing fields elsewhere. Nonetheless, the site is close to a substantial number of dwellings on the north-west side of Boarshaw Road and also along Hereford Way and contributes to recreational need there. The objectors have not disputed the evidence of the Council that this part of Boarshaw is not within the catchment area of a locally equipped area of play (LEAP). No specific proposal for the site is part of the UDP and it would be unreasonable of me to preclude any specific form of provision. Objector concern generally relates to a small park with play equipment. Those are not unusual features within, and about, an urban area and

the site has residential properties, mainly, to one side. The design of any scheme brought forward would need to take into account the living conditions of nearby residents who, as the Council indicates, would be consulted. That would include such matters as access for pedestrians and any landscaping.

- 14.5 Turning to **land at Cripplegate Lane, Cowm Top** - I have dealt with the employment/Village Green matters relating to this site at Chapter 8. The general wish of relevant objectors is to see the land defined as public open space. The site is in private ownership and comprises unimproved grassland. At the Hearing session into the Chapter 8 objections, objectors - then - did not significantly dispute the evidence of the agent, representing the owner, that the grassland had been recently been cropped - consistent with an agricultural use. There is no statutory public access to the site, albeit I saw from the tracks across it that it is used by the public - not least to gain access to a motorway bridge over the A627(M). While the site is used, unauthorized, for informal recreation, paragraph 14.7 to UG/3 indicates the areas that the policy is intended to protect. I share the view of the Council that the objection site is none of those, including an informal grassed area - the site being agricultural grassland. The policy does not indicate that it is the intention to protect agricultural land. Other matters weigh in favour of the Council's case. While it acknowledged, at 14.13 to UG/4, a shortage of informal open space in East Castleton - the size of the site would be substantially greater than that needed to meet any calculated deficiency. That assessment was not materially contested by objectors. Further, there is a play area north of Kirklee Road within a residential area. To the west of the site - and north of Hillcrest Road - is an area used for informal recreation, the ownership of which is unknown. To the south is an extensive area of unallocated countryside that has adjacent public access - similar to the objection site. Taking all the above matters into account, my overall assessment is that the site should not be designated under UG/3.
- 14.6 Next, to **Rochdale Rugby Union Football Club (RRUFC)**. The specific objection site has not been defined by either the objector or the Council. Nonetheless, I saw that RRUFC occupies a substantial area of land that is part of a larger area between Cutgate and Broadhalgh (generally enclosed by urban development). This comprises a range of recreational use, defined on the Proposals Map, and which fully justifies its designation as an area of existing recreational open space to be protected under the policy. The Council - through 2 planning permissions I am told - has allowed the demolition of buildings and the erection of dwellings on the site of the existing clubhouse. The reasons for those Decisions are a matter for it. They do not appear to me, however, to rest comfortably with the Council's stated UDP intention to protect this type of land - albeit it tells me (in the absence of any substantive detail) that the permissions would improve sporting facilities and enable wider use by the public. The Council has not provided any meaningful information on the sites subject of the planning permissions. It considers that, as the planning permissions have not been implemented, UG/3 designation should not yet be removed - this left to a

later date. I have come to a different view. The planning permissions are there and likely - reasonably in my view - to be implemented. The Council has apparently accepted the need for the developments at the RRUFC. The UDP should provide "certainty". The Proposals Map should be modified to delete from the UG/3 designation the land that does not require UG/3 designation, consistent with the planning permissions.

- 14.7 As to 441/6, **land off Hare Hill Road, Littleborough** - the Council has properly dealt with this objection under this policy rather than as a Green Belt objection suggested by the objector on the objection form. It is not within the Green Belt. The UG/3 allocation has been carried forward from the adopted plan. It is a pleasant area of open space close to the centre of Littleborough that, on the basis of my site visit, is well used for informal recreation. Together with Hare Hill Park opposite, it contributes to an attractive approach to the town and provides a complementary provision to that more formally available at the park. It forms a "buffer" to the Primary Employment Zone to the south-west. As a former gas works, the objector tells me that the site is understood to be contaminated but neither he nor the Council record any significant concerns over public health on the use of the site. While I saw on my numerous visits to Littleborough, that parking can - on occasion - be difficult, it appears to me that any need to increase provision should be based on an overall assessment by the Council of the area. That does not provide a justification for a modification to the plan to remove a site that reflects the intentions of UG/3.

Recommendation:

- 14.8 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **Modify the Proposals Map to reflect the last 3 sentences of paragraph 14.6 above.**
- **Modify the plan in accordance with Pre-Inquiry Change 17, this relating to land between Peel Street and George Street.**

**UG/3 – Protection of Existing Recreational Open Space (Omission)
(Land off Kelvin Avenue, Rhodes, Middleton)**

Objection: 87/1 Rhodes Tenants & Residents

Key Issue:

- **should the site be designated under the policy?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.9 In response to this Deposit Draft objection, the Council - at Revised Deposit Draft - has included the land within the policy, effected by Proposed Map Change 14/5. I saw that the site includes a community building with grassland about it. It has the potential for informal recreation, including that linked to the community building and notwithstanding the proximity of Junction 19 of the M60 and the slope to its slip road. I support the change to the plan made at Revised Deposit Draft and I see that the objector has conditionally withdrawn the objection.

Recommendation:

14.10 I recommend that:

- **At adoption, the Proposals Map should be modified in accordance with Proposed Map Change 14/5.**

**UG/3 – Protection of Existing Recreational Open Space (Omission)
(Land off Clay Lane, Norden, Rochdale)**

Objection: 83/1 Mr J Pierce

Key Issue:

- **should the land be designated under the policy?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.11 The land comprises 2 relatively small areas of land on either side of Spring Bank Lane at its junction with Clay Lane. Reasonably, the sites defined on the Proposals Map under this policy are over 0.2 hectares, these being those that would have considerable potential for recreation. The land to the west at about 0.1 hectares is treed, that to the east at around 0.16 hectares largely grassed with trees at the Clay Lane frontage. I saw that the former has little recreation potential, albeit of amenity value. While the latter would have more, that would be limited and I support the size restriction included within the policy. I note that Policy UG/10 seeks to protect urban amenity open space, subject to the criteria there.

Recommendation:

14.12 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

UG/4 – New Provision of Local Open Space

Objections:	98/28	Countryside Agency North West
	381/24	Government Office North West

Key Issues:

- **does the policy reflect the needs of rural areas, including access by people living there to open space provision in urban areas?**
- **is the policy acceptable for inclusion within a UDP?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.13 The first sentence of the policy statement indicates that the application of the policy is Borough-wide. That is reflected in the first sentences to paragraphs 14.12 and 14.13 of the reasoned justification. As to the latter, Objector 98/28 does not argue that it (identifying deficient areas in Townships of the Borough) is other than soundly based. Here, It would be reasonable of me to conclude that areas of the Borough most deficient in provision are within, generally, the urban areas. New provision of outdoor sports facilities in rural areas would not be prejudiced, in principle, by the policy. Some rural residents would be likely to wish to access urban facilities. Here, one of the intentions of Chapter 18 of the plan is to improve rural/urban accessibility across Rochdale, including by means other than the private car. Similarly, Policy G/UG/1 D) indicates the need to improve links between towns and areas of countryside.

14.14 Development plan policies should indicate the type of development that would be permitted. Reflecting paragraph 23 to Annex A of PPG 12, policies should form the basis for decisions on planning applications and the conditions to be attached to permissions. UG/4 does not give effect to that, not least through the phrase "The Council will seek to enhance". That represents an aim/objective not a statement of planning policy - and too general to be implemented in that form. The policy is not, therefore, clear and precise. It conflicts with the advice in the Development Plans Good Practice Guide. Nonetheless, the policy reasonably seeks to address new provision of local open space - not least in this Borough where I am satisfied that there are deficiencies. The policy should be reworded with the second paragraph aim/objective deleted, this already covered at paragraph 14.12 of the reasoned justification.

Recommendation:

14.15 I recommend that the policy be modified along the following lines:

- **“The Council will permit development proposals that increase the quantity and quality of local open space across the Borough, including those through:**
 - a) **improvements to existing fixed playground sites meeting the LEAP standard, some upgraded to NEAP standard;**
 - b) **new fixed playground sites of LEAP standard in areas that are currently deficient;**
 - c) **additional areas of informal recreational open space;**
 - d) **improvements to existing areas of informal recreational open space;**
and
 - e) **increased public access to, and within, areas of local open space.”**

UG/5 – New Provision of Outdoor Sports Facilities

Objections:	98/29	Countryside Agency North West
	381/25	Government Office North West

Key Issues:

- **does the policy reflect the needs of rural areas, including access by people living there to open space provision in urban areas?**
- **is the policy acceptable for inclusion within a UDP?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.16 I have dealt with similar objections at Policy UG/4 above, and come to the same overall conclusions - and for similar reasons. On 381/25, for example, the first line of the policy indicates that the Council will “seek to provide”. The policy does, however, address reasonable planning considerations - if suitably reworded. It relates, in part, to Council facilities. It should apply to all such provision in the Borough. Thus, on criterion a), I see no reason why this should be limited to Council facilities - not least as the management of them is a matter for it. As to criterion d), that is a statement of the Council's “good intentions” which I do not doubt - but inappropriate for inclusion within the policy. It should be reflected in the reasoned justification. Further, the second and third paragraphs of the policy are also a statement of “good intentions”. The latter is covered at paragraph 14.18, while - on the former - the reasoned justification would benefit from an addition that explains the standard that the Council seeks to achieve.

Recommendations:

14.17 I recommend that the policy be modified along the following lines:

- **“The Council will permit development proposals for formal outdoor sports facilities that meet existing and future demand. As part of any assessment, proposals will be assessed against whether they would result in:**
 - a) **the best use of existing sports pitches and other playing surfaces.**
 - b) **an upgrade of sports pitches and other playing surfaces, and the provision of associated facilities.**
 - c) **the provision of new sports pitches, as well as the replacement of those whose retention is not viable on economic management or local demand grounds.”**

- **The reasoned justification should be modified to reflect paragraph 14.16 above.**

UG/6 - Intensive Use of Recreational Open Space

Objection: 215/9 Sport England

Key Issue:

- **should the policy adopt a more positive approach to the intensification of use of recreational open space, as well as indicating more clearly the facilities covered by it?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.18 The general intention of the policy is to be supported - this would be likely to include an increase in the level of use. In my view, that is an objective of Sport England. It needs, however, to be balanced against the potential adverse effects of a proposed intensification - including, for example, floodlighting and car parking on the living conditions of nearby residents. These would be material planning considerations in the assessment of any development proposal. The policy establishes sufficient detail of the type of activities covered by it. Nonetheless, and not the subject of specific objection or recommendation, the Council should consider whether the policy could be better worded as a development control tool - perhaps along the following lines: development proposals for..... that result in the more intensive use will be permitted provided that they do not Here, the word “Significantly” at UG/6 c) could well be deleted. I leave this matter with the Council.

Recommendation:

14.19 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

**UG/7 – Protection of Allotments (Omission)
(Site bounded by Exmouth Street, Charlotte Street and Broad Lane)**

Objection: 256/1 K Sourbutts

Key Issue:

- **should land at Exmouth Street, Charlotte Street and Broad Lane be designated as an allotment site?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.20 The site is within a residential area and in allotment use. Having visited it and the surrounding area, I consider that the land meets the intentions of the policy as set out in paragraphs 14.20 to 14.22 of the Revised Deposit Draft version of the UDP. Proposals Map Change 14/3 there would effect that. I agree.

Recommendation:

14.21 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **At adoption, the Proposals Map should be modified in accordance with Proposed Map Change 14/3.**

UG/8 - Greenspace Corridors

Objections:	98/30	Countryside Agency North west
	157/2	Kenneth Hilton
	211/2	Helen Kirk
	357/1	Raw Domestic
	434/2	G D & D A Buckley
	434/5	G D & D A Buckley
	350/1	Mr D Hardwick
	437/1	Beva Construction

Key Issues:

- **should the policy be linked to sustainability criteria and landscape character appraisal, as well as further design/supplementary planning guidance?**
- **should land be deleted from the Greenspace Corridors?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

- 14.22 On the first issue (**98/30**), the Council - at Revised Deposit Draft - added to paragraph 14.25 of the reasoned justification the need to consider the character of the landscape. That is acceptable. As to sustainability criteria, the Agency does not tell me either, the criteria it would wish to see included or, any wording. The plan proceeds acceptably, generally, through the 4 priorities established by paragraph 4.55, reflected in the Key Objectives in Chapter 5. As to design/supplementary planning guidance, the Agency has not submitted any convincing evidence why any is necessary on this policy, at this stage in plan preparation. The Council tells me that it will be preparing further supplementary planning guidance in due course. That is a matter for it - any arising carrying appropriate weight in the development control process.
- 14.23 Turning to **site specific objections** and, first, land **between Smithy Bridge Road and Smallbridge (434/2)**. The objectors have not disputed the objection site included within the Council's evidence. I share the view of the Council that the site forms part of an extensive river valley (that of the Roch) that establishes a green corridor - generally linking the Pennines with Littleborough and Rochdale. In my opinion, the Roch Valley should be considered as a strategic asset for the Borough, not least as it helps to ensure green land between those 2 towns on the south side of the A58. The site is adjacent to the urban edge, but that gives it added relevance - this at a point where the corridor opens, generally, from its Pennine approach. Footpath access (that I acknowledge would be likely to be able to be retained in any potential housing development), and others in the area, give access to the semi-rural character of the Roch valley, including the Rochdale Canal. To remove the site from the corridor would truncate, substantially, its essential character and value.
- 14.24 Land **west of Holland Street and Stott Street (434/5)** is close to objection site 434/2 and projects to the rear of properties on the south side of Halifax Road. I come to the same conclusion, and for similar reasons, as that on 434/2.
- 14.25 Then, **land off Stubley Lane (157/2)**. Similarly, while adjacent to the urban edge - the site is in a sensitive location where the corridor opens between Stubley and Smithy Bridge with pedestrian access to, and from, Stubley Lane and the Rochdale Canal. While I saw that the site includes some evidence of a past built use, it has largely naturally regenerated such that I see no conflict with that previous use and its inclusion within this Green Corridor. Much of the site is also within the indicative floodplain of the River Roch. I give little weight to the objector's view that the allocation of the site for housing would represent a sensible rounding off. That would represent a regularization of urban form that, in my view, does not provide a sound basis for planning decisions.
- 14.26 Next, to **land at Spring Mill Walk, Smallbridge [Roach Vale Mill (357/1)]**. National planning guidance in PPG 9: Nature Conservation indicates, generally,

that natural wildlife heritage is not restricted to statutorily designated sites but that other features, such as wildlife corridors, can also contribute to maintaining the diversity of flora and fauna (paragraphs 14 and 15). That appears to me to be reflected in paragraph 14.24 c) and 14.24 d) of the reasoned justification to the Greenspace Corridor policies. Part of the corridor is culverted. The corridor in this location is, indeed, narrow and indicatively part of Ash Brook - a tributary of the River Roch - but establishes a link from an urbanized part of the Borough into the Roch Valley. The passage of wildlife would be supported by the designation. That, together with the intention of the UDP to seek enhancement of corridors, should be supported.

14.27 **Objection 211/2** relates to land adjacent to **Ashworth House, off Belfield Mill Lane**. It forms part of an extensive greenspace corridor along the Roch valley, to the north-east of the Rochdale - Littleborough railway line. To the south-east it links to the Beal Valley within the Green Belt. The corridor widens between Smithy Bridge, Smallbridge and Newbold providing an extensive area of greenspace for the substantial urban population about. My site visit confirmed the appropriateness of the western boundary of the corridor in this location - it following the edge of built development, as well as that along Belfield Mill Lane and the railway. This part of the corridor has significant pedestrian access and there is Council owned land in the vicinity. In my opinion, the semi-rural nature of the site rests comfortably within the corridor as a whole - including that part within the Defined Urban Area and notwithstanding the properties to the west. Although it, the site, comprises a small proportion of the corridor in this location, that does not provide a convincing justification for a development (preferably housing argued by the objector) on land that discharges a greenspace corridor function. The loss of small areas would be likely to prejudice the corridor as a whole. The objector refers me to Council intentions for the regeneration of the Roch and Beal valleys, not least through landscape and recreational regeneration - acknowledged by the Council. This is a joint initiative with other agencies but no detailed conclusions have apparently been identified. While, the objector argues the potential for a visionary/innovative scheme to emerge, no specific proposal is before me. It would be unwise of me to recommend a modification to the plan on that basis alone. Here, I note that UG/8 (A) would permit development proposals subject to the criteria therein. I have seen the sites of the 2 Pre-Inquiry Changes made by the Council to the greenspace corridor network but I have to consider the specific circumstances of this objection and do not support it.

14.28 **Beva Construction objects to the plan in respect of land off Buckley Road**. The objection site is an "outlier" of a larger corridor to the rear of properties on the west side of Park Road - linked to it for pedestrians by a crossing of Park Road. That, itself, is part of a wider area of corridor linked, acceptably, to a larger area generally running north-south and east-west to the north-west of the objection site. All bring greenspace close to the centre of Rochdale. The policy does not require Greenspace Corridors to be uninterrupted in their passage through the Borough - indeed I saw interruptions elsewhere. The site is adjacent

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to Hey Brook that passes to the west of Park Road. It has a tree presence and contributes to a green corridor along the brook - offering the potential for ecological interest, visual interest as well as - in this location within the main urban area - a contrast for local residents from urban development. On this objection, I support the Council.

14.29 Finally, to **Mr D Hardwick**. This is stated to be a UG/8 objection as registered by the Council. Neither, the nature of the objection nor, the modification that he would wish me to recommend to the Council is clear. The objection appears to relate to ensuring acceptable design standards on new development. Sufficient control would be established by Chapter 19 of the UDP.

Recommendation:

14.30 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to these objections.**

UG/8 - Greenspace Corridors (Omission) (Land adjoining Eafield Farm, Eafield Road, Littleborough)

Objections:	65/1	Mr W Chadwick
	66/1	Ms J Wilkinson
	67/1	Mr R Chadwick
	75/1	Mr C Parker
	86/1	Mr C Schofield
	88/1	Ms M Digiori
	195/1	Mr Edwards
	222/1	Mr Barron
	235/1	Mr P Schofield
	236/1	Mr J Porter
	237/1	Mrs McDonald
	257/1	Mr C & Mrs M Lees
	360/1	Mr J Tattersall
	362/1	Ms M Muir
	365/1	Mrs Moloney
	375/1	Mrs J Tully
	395/1	Mr F & Mrs Jackson
	401/1	Ms K Clancy
	401/301	Ms K Clancy
	468/201	Mr R Wilkinson

Key Issue:

- **should the land be included within the defined Greenspace Corridor?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.31 At Revised Deposit Draft, through Map Change 7/5, the site was deleted from the Defined Urban Area (Policy G/D/1) and included as part of a Greenspace Corridor (UG/8). Subsequently, the site was granted planning permission for housing in July 2003. As a result, the Council brings forward Pre-Inquiry Change 4 that includes the site within the urban area (Policy G/D/1) and not the Corridor. That is reflected in Pre-Inquiry Change 18. As the site has planning permission for housing, I agree.

Recommendation:

14.32 I recommend that the plan be modified along then following lines:

- **At adoption, the Proposals Map should be modified in accordance with Pre-Inquiry Changes 4 and 18.**

UG/8 - Greenspace Corridors: Greenvale Mill, Littleborough (Omission)

Objection: 346/1 Littleborough Civic Trust

Key Issue:

- **should this land be included within the defined Greenspace Corridor?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.33 The objector has not disputed the objection site before me that the Council describes as Greenvale Mill. This Corridor, overall, maintains open areas within an enclosing valley as it approaches Summit. At Revised Deposit Draft in response to the objection - through Proposed Map Change 14/2 - the Council has added an area of land adjacent to the railway. This would be consistent with the purposes of UG/8 designation.

Recommendation:

14.34 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **At adoption, the Proposals Map should be modified in accordance with Proposed Map Change 14/2.**

UG/8 (A) – Greenspace Corridors

Objections:	310/2	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd
	340/7	Mr D Tongue
	352/1	D A & G A Buckley

Key Issue:

- **should land be excluded from Greenspace Corridors?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.35 The objection site of **Redrow Homes (310/2)** is in 2 parts - land to the east and west of New Street. It is part of what I describe as the Roch Valley Green Corridor that descends from the Pennines - through Littleborough and, on, towards Rochdale itself. My opinion on what I consider to be the strategic importance of this valley corridor is at paragraph 14.23. I do not repeat it here, but comment on the location of the objection site within it. It is at a point where this descending corridor, narrow in its passage through Littleborough, opens out between Dearnley and Smithy Bridge. There is a substantial urban population about, for which this opening of the corridor provides a "green area" consistent with the intentions of the policy. It then narrows again - on the north-west side of Smithy Bridge. The site has, therefore, a strategic importance in this Green Corridor. It, and the corridor, reflect the Council's reasonable intention to provide, and protect, greenspace for its residents. In this former industrial Borough, that would be likely to maintain - and also improve - the quality of life of local residents.

14.36 Against the above, the objector argues a number of matters. Firstly, there is insufficient evidence of dereliction on the site that would persuade me to recommend a modification to the UDP. Secondly, both objector and Council agree - generally - that corridors vary in size, character and structure, as I saw. Specific objections need to be assessed against the character of each and the role it plays in meeting the plan intent for them - that I support. Here, I give weight to the important role discharged by the Roch Valley in bringing greenspace close to a substantial urban population. While, as the objector argues, development at the site would be likely to include a buffer to the residual corridor - that does not provide a convincing justification for the removal of land from it that clearly serves a corridor function. While, similarly, the corridor (including the site) does not include, I am told by the Council, any designated sites of ecological importance - its natural features in a relatively undisturbed landscape would provide ecological interest to complement its primarily open and semi-rural character. My balance of judgement is that the objection should not be supported.

14.37 **Objection 340/7** addresses land to the west of the **Stakehill Industrial Estate (SIE)**. The objector has not disputed Appendix 4 to the Council's evidence - this

the land to which the objection relates. On its west side, the site is adjacent to the Rochdale Canal. The site is part of a larger corridor that separates the SIE from the Rochdale urban area - with Green Belt to the north and south. The objector does not argue that the Rochdale Canal does not have ecological importance - rather that residential development would not be detrimental to the corridor. I have come to a different assessment. Residential development would be likely to reduce the corridor - adversely affecting visual amenity for the many local residents that have access to it, as well as prejudicing its existing, and potential, wildlife value. There would also be an adverse effect on the positive role the corridor plays in reducing the visual impact of a major existing industrial development.

14.38 Finally, to land to the **west of Stott Street (352/1)**. Notwithstanding committed residential development in the vicinity, I consider the land discharges Greenspace Corridor functions. The objectors consider that the residential development of the land would have a “rounding off” effect. I give that argument little weight as it implies a regularization of urban form that does not provide a sound basis for planning decisions.

Recommendation:

14.39 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to these objections.**

UG/8 (D) – Greenspace Corridor

Objection: 381/026 Government Office North West

Key Issue:

- **is the policy acceptable for inclusion within the UDP?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.40 I support this objection, reflecting similar conclusions elsewhere in my Report. The first sentence is worded as an aim/objective (“...be encouraged”) rather than a statement of planning policy that indicates the type(s) of development that would be permitted. The 2nd sentence, of what I understand to be the purpose of the policy, relates to the Council’s “good intentions” in relation to it - including at the 3rd sentence that which it describes as “beneficial actions”. While they are reasonable, all but a reworded first sentence should be included within the reasoned justification as amplification of the Council’s approach. Here, the Council itself acknowledges in its evidence that UG/8 (D) refers to “objectives”

(paragraph 5.3). I do not accept the Council's view that location within the reasoned justification would prejudice the policy intent.

Recommendations:

14.41 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **Delete the policy and substitute: "Development proposals will be permitted that protect and enhance Greenspace Corridors and realize their potential for recreation and nature conservation."**
- **The intent of the second and third sentences of the policy at Revised Deposit Draft should be included within the reasoned justification as an amplification of the Council's approach - reflecting paragraph 14.40 above.**

UG/9 - Stanney Brook Corridor and Park

Objection: 183/9 Lancashire Wildlife Trust

Key Issue:

- **does the policy provide adequate protection for nature conservation interests at the Stanney Brook Corridor and Park (SBCP)?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.42 I have dealt with objections to the Kingsway Business Park (KBP) at Chapter 8. The SBCP extends in linear form from the urban edge of Rochdale itself in a generally south-easterly direction to the M62 motorway. It is defined on the Proposals Map as a Greenspace Corridor and passes through the KBP. On an extended site visit in the area, I saw no reason to doubt its designation in its own right - requiring a specific policy in the plan. It is also a Site of Biological Importance (SBI). As acknowledged by the Council, the SBCP offers the potential to enhance the KBP and provide an amenity feature for local residents. Within that context, the objector seeks greater recognition for the nature conservation interests of the SBCP. The Council considers that would be covered by sub-paragraph a) of the policy statement, at its second paragraph. I have come to a different assessment. That paragraph is a statement of the Council's "good intentions" as they relate to the SBCP, not indicating the types of development proposals that would be permitted. The Council accepts the need to enhance the ecological value of this SBI. That should be reflected in the first paragraph of the policy, albeit I do not accept the form of wording suggested by the objector. Although not the subject of objection and reflecting the above - and on which I make no recommendation - the Council should consider whether the intent of the sub-paragraphs of the policy should form part of the reasoned justification.

Recommendation:

14.43 I recommend that the policy be modified along the following lines:

- **Delete the first 2 lines of the policy and substitute: “The Council will not permit development proposals that would adversely affect the recreational potential, natural landscape value and nature conservation interest of the Stanney Brook Corridor and Park”**

UG/10 – Protection of Urban Amenity Open Space

Objection: 381/27 Government Office North West

Key Issue:

- **is the policy acceptable for inclusion within the UDP?**

Inspector's Reasoning:

14.44 The Council argues that the policy reflects that in the adopted plan. I have to consider the plan and objection before me. Development plan policies should indicate the type of development that would be permitted. Reflecting paragraph 23 to Annex A of PPG 12, policies should form the basis for decisions on planning applications and the conditions to be attached to permissions. UG/10 does not give effect to that - not least the first 3 lines of the policy. Nonetheless, the policy seeks - reasonably - to address urban amenity open space protection, a relevant planning consideration in this Borough in my view. The intent of the policy should be retained, but in a modified form - this relating to the development proposals that would be permitted. While the Council considers there is difficulty in defining criteria on this policy, I have come to a different opinion. I see no reason why the policy should not include the land-use considerations that should be taken into account in the decision-making process. Here, 381/27 does not object to those set out in a) to e). Both paragraphs 11 (ii) and 2 (v) (Annex) to PPG 17 indicate, generally, that amenity greenspace/small areas of open space in urban areas may be of particular quality/public value. The policy broadly reflects that national intention. Here, however, the bracketed section of UG/10 b) is somewhat unfortunately worded and far from clear in its application. The key matter is visual amenity. That should be more clearly explained in the reasoned justification.

Recommendation:

14.45 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:

- **Delete the policy and substitute:**

“The Council will permit development proposals for the development or change of use of incidental urban greenspace where the benefits arising from the proposal outweigh the loss of the land. In assessing proposals, the existing value of the greenspace will be based on the following considerations:

- a) **its structural value, in defining local communities or providing a buffer between incompatible uses;**
- b) **its visual amenity value;**
- c) **its contribution towards the setting of individual buildings or groups of buildings;**
- d) **its value for passive recreation, as an attractive setting for key walking/cycle routes or, as an attractive bus waiting environment; and**
- e) **whether it comprises an area of nature conservation interest or landscape feature worthy of retention.”**

- **Visual amenity value should be explained in the reasoned justification.**

Chapter 14 –Urban Greenspace (Omission)

Objection: 381/51 Government Office North West

Key Issue:

- **do the policies reflect revised national planning guidance, this in PPG 17?**

Inspector’s Reasoning:

14.46 For obvious reasons, I have dealt with this objection at the end of the chapter. I have considered the objections in this chapter, as they relate to Rochdale, in the light of PPG 17. Subject to my conclusions and recommendations above, I am satisfied that they acceptably reflect national guidance.

Recommendation:

14.47 I recommend that:

- **No modification be made to the plan in response to this objection.**

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