

## CHAPTER 7: DEFINED URBAN AREA, GREEN BELT AND PROTECTED OPEN LAND

### G/D/1 (Part One Policy) - Defined Urban Area

<b>Objections:</b>	157/1	Mr K Hilton
	212/1	Churchwardens of St Barnabas Church
	248/1	Peel Investments (North) Ltd
	312/1	Mrs S Mountain
	312/201	Mrs S Mountain
	340/1	Mr D Tongue
	352/2	D Buckley
	358/1	Bryant Homes Ltd
	468/202	Mr R Wilkinson

#### Key Issue:

- should these objection sites be included within the Defined Urban Area (DUA)?

#### Inspector's Reasoning:

- 7.1 I have dealt with **Objector 157/1's** Greenspace Corridor and Housing concerns at Chapters 14 and 9, respectively. On the former, the land should remain within the Corridor. This site at Stubble Fold should not, therefore, be included within the DUA. I come to a similar conclusion on **352/2**. Similarly, on **468/202**, I have dealt with issues at Eafield Road at Chapter 14, where Pre-Inquiry Change 4 is accepted.
- 7.2 The DUA/Green Belt issues relating to **212/1** are addressed at paragraph 7.17 of my Report (G/D/2). The site is properly included within the Green Belt and should not, therefore, form part of the DUA. I come to a similar view on objection site **248/1** where the DUA/Green Belt issues are covered at Policy G/D/2.
- 7.3 **312/1 and 312/201** relate to land about Nos 38 and 40 Smithy Bridge Road on its south-west side. At Revised Deposit Draft, Proposed Map Change 7/1 added land adjacent to No 38 to the DUA. The objector seeks further land to be included within the DUA to the south-west of the 2 properties. It is within a Greenspace Corridor that extends, generally, from Rochdale through to Littleborough. There is large-scale urban development about the site. In my opinion, the Council at Revised Deposit Draft has acceptably defined the DUA in this location, protecting greenspace and consistent with an overall approach that seeks to concentrate development within the urban area.

- 7.4 The objector argues that the Revised Deposit Draft site has potential for development for canal or railway related uses, but has submitted no evidence why either is, in itself, justified in this location. Neither that, nor the objector's views that the site is well related to public transport routes and would not prejudice wildlife links through the canal and railway, provide a justification for including this land within the DUA that, consistent with plan intentions, establishes a pleasant visual contrast to the urban development about.
- 7.5 This objection site (340/1) comprises 2 elements - land to the south of the Stakehill Industrial Estate and that to the west. The former is approved Green Belt consistent with paragraph 1.5 of PPG2 (Revised). The latter is part of a Greenspace Corridor between the estate and the Rochdale Canal and its inclusion justified on that basis (dealt with in more detail in Chapter 14).
- 7.6 Then to 358/1. At Revised Deposit Draft, taking into account the urban concentration approach of the UDP, the site has properly been excluded from the DUA. That would need, however, to be considered against my conclusion in Chapter 9 that additional land for housing needs to be allocated in the UDP. This site should, reasonably, form part of the assessment I recommend.

**Recommendation:**

**7.7 I recommend that:**

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

**G/D/2 (Part One Policy) – Green Belt**

<b>Objections:</b>	71/1	Ms N Heron
	104/1	Simmonds NW Ltd
	208/1	Ropemaker Properties Ltd
	210/1	The Executors of J Milne
	210/4	The Executors of J Milne
	210/5	The Executors of J Milne
	212/2	Churchwardens of St Barnabas Church, Shore
	213/1	Mr F Thomas
	213/2	Mr F Thomas
	213/3	Mr F Thomas
	248/2	Peel Investments (North) Ltd
	272/1	Jason Plastics Limited
	340/2	Mr D Tongue
	381/9	Government Office North West
	383/1	Mr R Atherton
	410/1	Miss H Davenport
	413/1	Mrs A Price

414/1	Mr & Mrs A Tomlinson
415/1	Miss M Davenport
416/1	Mr & Mrs R Oldham
433/1	Tack Lea Works

**Key Issues:**

- **should sites dealt with be excluded from the Green Belt in the light of local, regional and national planning policy?**
- **should land at Haugh Fold, Newhey - as well as that at Langley Lane, Middleton - be included within the Green Belt, also in the light of local, regional and national planning policy?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

**Context**

7.8 These objection sites are within the approved Green Belt as defined in the adopted plan (1999) and carried forward into the UDP - other than the land at Haugh Fold, Newhey that the Council proposes to exclude from the Green Belt, and that at Middleton that objectors seek to be included within the Green Belt. With those exceptions, the plan before me establishes continuity for Green Belt designation in development plan terms. This is, therefore, consistent with the advice in PPG2 (Revised) that the essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence (paragraph 2.1). Further, once the general extent of a Green Belt has been established - it should only be altered in exceptional circumstances (2.6). A similar consideration applies to detailed boundaries defined in earlier development plans (2.6) - this relevant to what, in my opinion, is a recently adopted development plan (1999). Turning to Regional Planning Guidance, none of the objectors to this plan have drawn to my attention any convincing requirement that Green Belt boundaries, overall in Rochdale or elsewhere, should be reviewed. Rather the opposite, there being no need to encroach significantly on the Green Belt in Greater Manchester to meet long term development needs (paragraph 3.30) and there being no need to undertake a strategic study of Green Belt within the conurbation before 2011 (Policy SD5). While, in Chapter 9, I have concluded on a shortage of housing land supply, meeting that would not involve approved Green Belt. My assessment of objection sites to this policy proceeds accordingly.

7.9 So, to begin, at **land south of Blackstone Edge Road (71/1)**. This objector argues that the site should be included within the DUA and removed from the Green Belt. I give limited weight to her view that the objection would "round off" the DUA. That implies the regularization of urban form that does not form - in my opinion - a sound basis for the definition of Green Belt boundaries. PPG2 (Revised) does not indicate that this is a basis for the definition of boundaries. The Green Belt boundary, in both the adopted plan and the UDP, follows -

generally - the edge of development in this location, about properties that rise along Blackstone Edge Road from Littleborough. This rising grassland site is clearly part of the countryside about the road, notwithstanding its location close to existing properties. As such, it reflects the purposes of the first and third bullet points to paragraph 1.5 of PPG2 (Revised), both relevant to the objection site. To remove it from the Green Belt would conflict with national planning guidance. I saw little visual evidence of a past industrial/mining use with associated works at the site. Any that may have existed, have clearly blended into this upland landscape. The site should, therefore, not be considered as "brownfield". The objector has not demonstrated the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to set aside the clear intention of national planning guidance.

- 7.10 Turning, then, to **land north of Blackstone Edge Road (104/1)**, similar considerations apply. In my opinion, the Green Belt has been acceptably defined in this location - providing a clear distinction between the properties on Blackstone Edge Road and Halifax Road and the countryside about. The site is clearly part of this countryside, notwithstanding boundary and adjacent development. The land beyond is also countryside that, together with the site, bring it to the urban edge of Littleborough. As such, the site reflects the first and third bullet points to paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised). To remove it from the Green Belt would conflict with national planning guidance. The objector considers that the land would be able to make a contribution to development land supply. I have dealt with these matters elsewhere in my Report, primarily Chapter 9. The objector has not demonstrated the exceptional circumstances that are sufficient for me to set aside the clear intention of national planning guidance.
- 7.11 Next, to **land adjacent to the Heywood Distribution Park (208/1)**. The site is close to the Borough boundary with Bury. It is part of a larger area of Green Belt that separates Heywood from Bury and Whitefield. As such, the site reflects the first 3 bullet points to paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised) and generally reflected in Policy G/D/2. To remove the site from the Green Belt with its development for a roadside/refuelling facility would, therefore, conflict with national planning guidance. The objector argues remoteness from refuelling facilities but has not materially disputed the evidence of the Council that a facility exists at the distribution park, near the junction of Hareshill Road. Sites remain undeveloped in the park, subject to EC/9. I am not persuaded by the objector's sustainability arguments. No exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated sufficient for me to set aside the clear intention of national guidance. **As to land at Haugh Fold (381/9)**, I have dealt with this site at paragraph 7.21 of my Report.
- 7.12 **210/1** relates to 2 areas of countryside at **Buersil Head Farm, Thornham New Road** - forming part of the approved Green Belt, that helps to separate the towns of Rochdale, Royton and Middleton. As such, the sites reflects the first 3 and fifth bullet points to paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised) that establish the purposes of including land in the Green Belt - generally reflected in Policy G/D/2. To remove the sites from the Green Belt, with their development, would conflict with

national planning guidance. The objection argues that in terms of Site A, a more logical boundary for the Green Belt would be Thornham New Road, thereby allowing B1 type uses on the site. As a physical feature, the M62 already forms an acceptable boundary for the Green Belt [paragraph 2.9 of PPG2 (Revised)]. Its potential for B1 uses does not provide any convincing justification for its release from the Green Belt at a visible location from the motorway and Thornham New Road. I come to a similar view on Site B with its intended comprehensive development. The implied, poor environmental quality of the objection land - a view I do not share - is not in any event persuasive, as the quality of a landscape is not relevant to the continued protection of land within a Green Belt (paragraph 1.7 of national planning guidance). None of these matters, or the proximity of the sites to Oldham Road, represent the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to set aside national planning guidance.

- 7.13 The substantial **objection land off Bentley Avenue, Stakehill (210/4)** is within the approved Green Belt - carried forward into the UDP - between the existing Stakehill Industrial Estate and the A627(M). It forms part of a wider area of Green Belt that crosses the motorway and into Oldham Metropolitan Borough. The objector considers the site to be “under-used”, but does not elaborate. National planning guidance in PPG2 (Revised) does not require that Green Belt definition should be based on an “under-use” of land. This site forms part of an area of Green Belt countryside that separates Middleton/Rochdale town/Oldham. It contributes to a check on unrestricted sprawl and safeguards the countryside from encroachment. The Green Belt in this general area would also assist in urban regeneration in Rochdale. That the objector considers that a development would represent a logical extension of the land up to the motorway does not, in my view, represent an appropriate basis for Green Belt definition. Neither does the argument that the site is well placed in relation to motorway and public transport access. While I have no reason to doubt the objector’s view that a comprehensive scheme could be established - neither that, nor the other matters raised by it, represent the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to set aside national planning guidance.
- 7.14 I deal next with **213/1, land off Bentley Avenue, Stakehill**. It raises similar issues - a number dealt with in the paragraph above. Here, the objector has not disputed the Council’s evidence plan of the land to which the objection relates. The Green Belt boundary follows Bentley Avenue. It has, in my view, been properly defined on Bentley Avenue and onwards around the Stakehill Industrial Estate (SIE). It is not unusual for frontage properties to be included within a Green Belt where they contribute to a clear definition of a Green Belt boundary. It follows, therefore that the undeveloped objection site should be similarly assessed. I share the view of the Council that it makes a contribution to 4 of the 5 purposes of including land within the Green Belt. As in the paragraph above, I give limited weight to the view of the objector that the site is “under-used”. Similarly, its view that the site - together with land to the north in separate ownership - could be used as an extension to the SIE. is not based on any

substantive justification. No exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated, consistent with national planning guidance, sufficient for me to recommend a modification to the plan.

- 7.15 **Objection 340/2** effectively completes the plan objections about the SIE to the north, east and south - this objection relating to the last. Clearly, I have no reason to come to a different conclusion, for similar reasons, on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. I do not, therefore, share the view of the objector that its intentions “would not be of detriment” to those purposes. It argues “very special circumstances” in relation to its objection. Those, of course, relate to an inappropriate development proposal within an approved Green Belt - rather than the exceptional circumstances relating to Green Belt definition. The objector considers that the site is required to provide an adequate supply of housing and employment land, reflected in other objections. I have dealt with those strategic issues in Chapters 8 and 9 of my Report. Exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated that would justify the deletion of this land from the Green Belt.
- 7.16 **Land off Thornham Lane, Slattocks (210/5)** is part of an extensive area of countryside, forming part of the approved Green Belt, that separates the main urban area of Rochdale - at the southern edge of Castleton from Middleton and the SIE. It has a similar role in terms of Heywood and Royton, the latter within Oldham Metropolitan Borough. The Council has not disputed the view of the objector that the site is not part of a major farm holding; that the Green Belt about the site includes built development at the Rochdale Road and Thornham Lane frontages; and it has reasonable accessibility to services. I give substantial weight, however, to the clear role that the site plays in meeting the requirements for Green Belt definition as established by PPG2 (Revised) and reflected in Policy G/D/2 of the UDP. No exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated.
- 7.17 **The Churchwardens of St Barnabas Church, Shore (212/2)** seek the removal of the Church and its environs from the Green Belt and the inclusion of the site within the Defined Urban Area (DUA). The site is at the edge of the Green Belt in this location and adjacent to the DUA at the residential properties about St Barnabas's Drive. Having visited the site and the area about, this is a sensitive and important section of approved Green Belt. It comprises a relatively narrow “finger” of countryside that extends into the urban area separating Shore in Littleborough from the extensive residential development to the south, part of Rochdale town - and across a valley. The site reflects the first 3 bullet points to paragraph 1.5 to PPG 2 (Revised) that establish the purposes of including land within the Green Belt - generally reflected in Policy G/D/2. To remove this site from the Green Belt would conflict with national planning guidance. The objector suggests the potential for recreation, leisure or community uses, (unspecified), but complementary to church activity. They do not represent the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to set aside the clear intentions of

national planning guidance. The site should remain in the Green Belt with no change to the DUA.

- 7.18 **Next, to land at Plumpton Farm, Thornham (213/2).** That within Rochdale is part of an extensive area of agricultural countryside - forming part of the approved Green Belt - that separates the towns of Rochdale, Royton and Middleton. As such, the site reflects the first 3 and fifth bullet points to paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised) that establish the purposes of including land in the Green Belt - generally reflected in Policy G/D/2. To remove the site from the Green Belt, with its development for housing, would therefore conflict with national planning guidance. The objector argues that the site is close to Oldham Road (with bus services) and would allow the potential for the development of affordable housing at a site that would be able to have perimeter landscaping. Consideration should also be given to the release of part of the site. Neither those arguments nor, the objector's view that his intention would help sustain the remaining agricultural land, represent the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to recommend a departure from national planning guidance.
- 7.19 **Land at Buersil and to the rear of Oldham Road (213/3)** is part of an extensive area of countryside, forming part of the approved Green Belt, that separates the towns of Rochdale, Royton and Middleton. As such, the site reflects the first 3 and fifth bullet points to paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised) that establish the purposes of including land in the Green Belt - generally reflected in Policy G/D/2. To remove the site from the Green Belt, with its development for housing, would conflict with national planning guidance - particularly as this agricultural site falls to the existing Green Belt boundary at the rear of the properties at Oldham Road. Its development would represent a discordant intrusion into the countryside that has been defined as approved Green Belt. The objector argues that the site is close to Oldham Road, with bus services, and would allow the potential for development for a range of house types. While I have no reason to disagree, neither those, nor the objector's view that his intention would help sustain the remaining agricultural land, represent the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to recommend a departure from national planning guidance.
- 7.20 **Peel Investments (North) Ltd (248/2)** seeks a redefinition of the inner boundary of the Green Belt to exclude land to the north of Hareshill Road. In this location, the Green Belt boundary reflects the urban edge established by the DUA. The site is primarily in agricultural use and, in my view, forms part of the countryside to the south of Heywood. It discharges an important Green Belt role in checking the sprawl of the large built-up area of Heywood; assists in preventing Heywood and Middleton from merging; safeguards the countryside from encroachment; and assists in urban regeneration consistent with the general urban concentration approach of the UDP. The objector considers that the site is required to meet a shortfall in housing/employment land over the plan period. I have dealt with those strategic issues in Chapters 8 and 9 of my Report - sufficient to say that, there, this Report does not recommend the removal of land from the approved

Green Belt. Exceptional circumstances have not been demonstrated that would justify the deletion of this land from the Green Belt.

- 7.21 **The Government Office** objects to the removal of **land at Haugh Fold** from the approved Green Belt. To begin, the land would become part of the DUA. The countryside about the site forms part of the Green Belt around Milnrow and Haugh/Newhey. The objection site has been developed for houses adjacent to the urban edge and on both sides of Bethany Lane. The reasons for that decision are a matter for the Council. It is not intended, therefore, to release the site for development. Visually, it forms part of the urban area - rather than the countryside/Green Belt from which it has limited visibility. A clear Green Belt boundary would result. I do not consider that this developed site adjacent to the urban edge performs any significant Green Belt purpose. The dwellings on the site are, however, at a fairly low density. That raises the potential for an intensification of the development but any arising, if permitted through the development control process, would be seen as part of the urban area rather than the countryside/Green Belt. If this site was, however, to be freestanding within the Green Belt such intensification would be likely to have implications for openness. In the specific circumstances of this objection, my balance of judgement is that exceptional circumstances exist that justify the Council's proposed change to the approved Green Belt boundary in the adopted plan.
- 7.22 Now to **land at Middleton, generally about Langley Lane/Hollin Lane (410, 413, 414, 415 and 416/1)** that objectors wish to see included within the Green Belt. The objectors have not disputed the Council's definition of the objection site. It is part of countryside adjacent to the northern urban edge of Middleton (excluded from the Green Belt in the adopted plan) and which extends through approved Green Belt to the southern urban edge of Heywood. It is not allocated in the UDP and lies outside the DUA. The approved Green Belt establishes the relevant gap between Heywood and Middleton, consistent with the purposes of including land within a Green Belt. The objection site comprises a substantial area of land. Any move to add it to the Green Belt should be part of a wider review of Green Belt boundaries in Greater Manchester that Regional Planning Guidance indicates is not necessary at this time. That is consistent with the advice in PPG2 (Revised) that the essential characteristic of Green Belts is their permanence (paragraph 2.1). Bearing in mind the clarity of national and regional guidance, the objectors have not established the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to depart from it by recommending a modification to the UDP that would include this land within the Green Belt.
- 7.23 Then, to **Tack Lea Works Ltd at Greenbooth Road (433/1)**. In my view, the Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of the objection site has been correctly defined - this following the urban edge that includes the works itself with extensive Green Belt countryside beyond, including the site. As such: it prevents the sprawl of the large built-up area of Norden/Cutgate/Shawfield; safeguards the countryside from encroachment; and contributes to urban regeneration. To

remove the site from the Green Belt for housing development would conflict with these Green Belt purposes. The objector submits a number of matters to support its case, all taken into account. I have no reason to doubt that - setting aside Green Belt considerations - an appropriately designed residential development would, potentially, be able to be accommodated on the site, including an access. It would, however, be reasonable of me to conclude that this would be the case with most proposals for housing development within the Green Belt. The objector also argues that the proceeds from the development would be able to assist in the regeneration of the existing mill premises but submits no meaningful evidence in this respect. None of these, or the others raised, represent the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to set aside national planning guidance.

7.24 The objection site at **272/1** is part of the approved Green Belt defined in the adopted plan and carried into the UDP. I have taken into account the objector's comments on the Council's evidence, as well as the latter's rebuttal. In my opinion, the site is within a particularly sensitive part of the Green Belt between Rochdale (Heywood) and Bury, this where it narrows between Summit, Darn Hill and Heap Bridge. The site is undeveloped, fairly described as countryside, and clearly contributes to the openness of the Green Belt in this location. Varying interpretations have been placed by the parties on paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised). I share the view of the Council set out in paragraph 7.2 of its evidence. There has been substantial development to the west of Heywood and the east of Bury. There is now only a limited gap between them. The development of the site, or part of it as argued by the objector (taking into account topography), would be likely to move towards further merging of these 2 towns - while there would be an encroachment into the countryside. Further, the general intent of the first purpose at 1.5, is such that there would be conflict with it. While, at this specific site, I give somewhat less weight to the Council's regeneration arguments that approach, nonetheless, is one of the main thrusts of the UDP. The objector refers me to Policy C/5 of the adopted plan, but I have to consider its objection in the light of the UDP and national planning guidance. I have taken into account the operational requirements of the company and its stated search of available sites - the Council arguing that little detailed information has been made available to it in this respect. The Rochdale Development Agency is assisting the objector on its needs and the Council is willing to enter into discussion with it. That is a matter between the parties. Drawing all these matters together, no exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated that would justify a modification to the UDP - in conflict with long established national planning guidance.

7.25 Finally, to **383/1**. Here, the objector tells me that the site is part of the residential curtilage to No 340 Bamford Road, albeit I saw limited evidence to reflect that. In any event, that view carries limited weight in this Report on this objection - the main matter before me being whether exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated that would justify the removal of the site from the approved Green Belt. Here, it is not unusual for development to be "washed-over" by Green Belt

designation - the key matter being whether it, and land about, discharges Green Belt purposes. The objection site is rural in character and, fairly, should be described as part of countryside about Hooley Bridge. As to the approved Green Belt in this location, carried forward into the UDP, I agree with the Council's evidence. It is part of an area of Green Belt that separates Rochdale town from Heywood, with a limited gap between the 2 as a result of past urban extension. The removal of the site from the Green Belt and its development for housing would, in my view, conflict with the general intent of the first 3 bullet points to paragraph 1.5 of PPG2 (Revised). There would be a further move towards the merging of the 2 towns and countryside would be encroached upon, albeit the objector argues that the site is within the cartilage of No 40. I see no convincing reason why the development of this site, close to the DUA at Heywood, should not be taken as other than an element of sprawl closely linked to an urban area. The UDP supports regeneration and the Green Belt boundary about Heywood is consistent with that. Exceptional circumstances that would justify the removal of land from an approved Green Belt defined in an adopted development plan are a matter for the decision-maker in the light of specific circumstances. Those relating to the planning history at No 340 are not directly comparable to the UDP objection before me while, on sustainability matters, the site is approaching 1 kilometre from Heywood Town centre with difficult gradients to and from and not, as the Council argues, on a Quality Bus Corridor. While the Council would need to consider Heywood as a potential location for housing development to meet the shortage in housing supply that I have identified in Chapter 9, it would need to follow the sequence established there. That would not include approved Green Belt as is the case with this site. No exceptional circumstances have been demonstrated.

**Recommendation:**

**7.26 I recommend that:**

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

**G/D/2 – Green Belt (Omission) - Birch Motorway Service Area**

**Objection:** 306/4 Moto Hospitality

**Key Issue:**

- **should the Birch Motorway Service Area (BMSA) be excluded from the Green Belt?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.27 This is one of a number of objections relating to the BMSA. I have dealt with them at what I consider to be the relevant parts of my Report. The general context for my assessment of Green Belt objections is established above. The BMSA is within the approved Green Belt defined in the adopted plan and carried forward into the UDP. It forms part of an extensive area of, generally, countryside that separates Heywood and Middleton. I share the view of the Council that this wider area reflects 4 of the 5 purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Particularly around conurbations, it is not unusual for such areas of Green Belt to include developed areas such as the objection site. To remove the site from the Green Belt would limit control on development, potentially reducing the openness of the Green Belt in what I consider to be a sensitive area of Green Belt close to the built-up areas of Middleton and Heywood. The approved Green Belt between those 2 towns would be reduced. While, I note the objector's view that the MSA makes a limited contribution to Green Belt objectives, I give weight to the advice in PPG2 (Revised) at paragraph 1.7. This indicates that the extent to which land fulfills the objectives at paragraph 1.6 is not itself a material factor in the continued protection of land within a Green Belt. Green Belt purposes should take precedence over the land-use objectives. Taking into account all the above matters, the objector has not established exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to recommend the deletion of land.

**Recommendation:**

7.28 I recommend that:

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

**D/3 – Boundary Change to the Green Belt and Defined Urban Area**

**Objection:** 381/10 Government Office North West

**Key Issue:**

- **should land and buildings at Haugh Fold/Newhey be excluded from the Green Belt?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.29 I have dealt with the issues arising from this objection at paragraph 7.21 (Policy G/D/2).

**Recommendation:**

**7.30 I recommend that:**

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

**D/3 – Boundary Change to the Green Belt and Defined Urban Area (Omission) - Land at Bent House, Halifax Road**

**Objection:** 441/1 Mr J Kay

**Key Issue:**

- **should the site be excluded from the Green Belt in the light of local, regional and national planning policy?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.31 The context for my assessment of Green Belt objections to the UDP that seek removal of land from the Green Belt is set out at paragraph 7.8 of my Report. It applies to this objection. The site is part of an area of approved Green Belt countryside to the east of the Rochdale Canal and the west of Halifax Road that extends towards the centre of Littleborough. In my opinion, the Green Belt boundary has been properly defined in the UDP, reflecting that in the adopted plan, and following the urban area of Littleborough. I share the view of the Council that the objection site fulfills 4 of the 5 purposes of including land within a Green Belt as set out in paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised). In support of the objection, the objector draws my attention to improved maintenance at the site arising from low-density residential development and that much of the site is too small for agricultural purposes. They do not represent the exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to set aside the clear intention of national planning guidance.

**Recommendation:**

**7.32 I recommend that:**

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

**D/3 – Boundary Change to the Green Belt and Defined Urban Area (Omission) - Land to the West of Todmorden Road**

**Objection:** 441/2 Mr J Kay

**Key Issue:**

- **should the site be excluded from the Green Belt in the light of local, regional and national planning policy?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.33 I have set out the planning context as it applies to this objection site in paragraph 7.8 above. The Green Belt boundary in this area generally follows the edge of Littleborough, defining both the urban area and adjacent countryside - the latter including the site. I share the view of the Council that the site reflects 4 of the 5 purposes of including land within a Green Belt [paragraph 1.5 of PPG2: (Revised) and reflected in Policy G/D/2 of the UDP], particularly the separation of Summit and Littleborough. While I saw that some recent development has taken place in the vicinity of the site, the objector does not appear to argue that this has been on land defined as Green Belt in the adopted plan. The development of the site for housing would represent a major visual intrusion into the countryside and Green Belt. The objector has not established exceptional circumstances that justify the removal of the site from the Green Belt.

**Recommendation:**

**7.34 I recommend that:**

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

**D/3 – Boundary Change to the Green Belt and Defined Urban Area (Omission) - Land adjoining Lower Townhouse Farm**

**Objection:** 441/3 Mr J Kay

**Key Issue:**

- **should the site be excluded from the Green Belt in the light of local, regional and national planning policy?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.35 I have set out the planning context as it applies to this objection site in paragraph 7.8 above. The Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of this site follows Carriage

Drive, defining the urban area to the south and extensive Green Belt countryside to the north. I share the view of the Council that the site reflects 4 of the 5 purposes of including land within a Green Belt [paragraph 1.5 of PPG2: (Revised) and reflected in Policy G/D/2 of the UDP], including maintaining the separation of Clough and Summit. To remove the site from the Green Belt with a residential development would represent a major visual intrusion into the countryside and Green Belt, reducing the openness of the Green Belt. While the objector argues that the land is no longer of sufficient size for agricultural use, that does not represent the exceptional circumstance sufficient for me to support the objection.

**Recommendation:**

**7.36 I recommend that:**

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

**D/4 – Control of Development in the Green Belt - General**

<b>Objections:</b>	37/1	North West Tourist Board
	98/7	Countryside Agency North West
	359/201	Healey Dell Properties and David Mclean Homes
	381/11	Government Office North West
	450/1	Deckers Restaurants Ltd

**Key Issues:**

- **should the policy allow small-scale tourist development - together with leisure, recreation and other uses related to rural diversification?**
- **does the policy reflect PPG2 (Revised) and should it be consistent with Policy C/5 of the adopted plan?**
- **should Healey Hall Mills be defined as a major existing developed site within the Green Belt?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

**7.37 I begin with 37/1 and 98/7.** While many Green Belt tourism-related businesses may wish to expand (37/1), the construction of new buildings for that specific use does not reflect national planning guidance in PPG2 (Revised), and reflected in the policy. Similarly, limited extension/alteration/replacement relates to existing dwellings - not tourism related businesses. The re-use of buildings would reflect national guidance, subject to the tests therein and Policy D/9. Any potential developer pursuing a proposal that amounted to inappropriate development within the Green Belt would be required to establish very special circumstances, sufficient to set aside the long established presumption against inappropriate

development. The decision-maker would assess them, before coming to a conclusion. It follows, therefore, that I must come to a similar conclusion on 98/7 - that (on the limited basis of its objection) also seeks, in my view, to justify a variation to national guidance on Green Belts. Other policies of the plan relate to rural diversification and, within the context established by PPG2 (Revised) and the UDP, that interest would not be prejudiced in principle.

7.38 Then, to the other objections. As to **Deckers Restaurants Ltd**, I have noted the date of the publication of PPG2 (Revised) and the stage then reached in the preparation of the adopted plan. I have to consider the objection before me in the light of current national planning guidance. That does not indicate (paragraph 3.4) that an appropriate form of new building within the Green Belt would be an existing source of employment, albeit that Annex C addresses major developed sites in the Green Belt that may include employment buildings. Here, I share the view of the Council that the adopted plan - for the reasons it argues - is not consistent with national planning guidance. The objection would establish an extension to long established control on inappropriate development within a Green Belt that I am not prepared to support.

7.39 **Turning to the Government Office North West**, it appears to me that the Council in this policy is attempting to reflect paragraph 3.4 to PPG2 (Revised), this relating to the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt. Criterion d) should reflect the 5<sup>th</sup> bullet point to the guidance and I shall recommend accordingly. Here, the criterion refers to Policy D/5. I have seen the sites listed there. The Council is reluctant to use the word "major" to describe them. I have taken into account the Inspector's Report on the adopted plan and consider that, within a Rochdale context, they should fairly be described as "major". As I conclude, specifically, below that Rainshore Mill and Healey Hall Mills should be treated as major developed sites within the Green Belt (Policy D6), it follows that criterion e) to Policy D/4 is not necessary. Finally, I comment that the use of the word "acceptable" in the second paragraph of the policy would be better replaced by "permitted".

7.40 I have dealt with the issues at **Healey Hall Mills** below.

#### **Recommendations:**

7.41 **I recommend that the policy be modified along the following lines:**

- **Amend the end of criterion c): add “; and”**
- **Delete criterion d) and substitute: “d) Limited infilling or redevelopment of major, existing developed sites identified under, and in accordance with, Policy D/5.**
- **Delete criterion e).**

**D/5 – Infilling at Existing Developed Sites in the Green Belt**

<b>Objections:</b>	248/3	Peel Investments (North) Ltd
	248/5	Peel Investments (North) Ltd
	306/5	Moto Hospitality
	306/6	Moto Hospitality
	311/204	Highways Agency
	381/12	Government Office North West
	432/1	Mr G Hayes

**Key Issues:**

- **does the policy reflect PPG2 (Revised)?**
- **the UDP treatment of the Birch Motorway Service Area (BMSA).**
- **should land at Hooley Bridge be included within D/5 iii.?**
- **the future use and definition of Site D/5 v., Tack Lea Works.**
- **does the policy reflect the role of the Highways Agency?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.42 The heading to this policy is **“INFILLING AT EXISTING DEVELOPED SITES IN THE GREEN BELT”**, albeit the policy statement also refers to the replacement or limited extension of buildings. To begin, the Council has now accepted - through Inquiry Change 42 - that the sites listed in the policy should be described as “major”. The change would effect that and I agree the Council’s reasoning. I also share the view of the Government Office North West that the policy does not reflect Annex C to PPG 2 (Revised) in providing for the “replacement or limited extension of buildings”. The Council’s evidence (in response to Moto Hospitality) acknowledges that the policy is more accommodating than in PPG2 (Revised). While it argues that outworn, inappropriate buildings may need to be replaced to maintain the use, that is unlikely to be a situation unique to Rochdale. In my opinion, the Council has not justified a departure from national planning guidance that would represent an extension to long established control on development in Green Belts.

7.43 **Turning to the BMSA (306/5 and 306/6)**, it is not redundant but in continuing use [paragraph C1 to Annex C of PPG2 (Revised)]. At Revised Deposit Draft, the Council has included this site within Policy D/5. I agree, fairly reflecting the other sites included therein and with no convincing case from the objector why it should be the subject of a separate policy. Any development proposal arising within should be subject of the tests of the policy that should reflect national planning guidance.

7.44 Reasonably, I can deal - briefly - with the objection by the **Highways Agency**. Policy D/5 is a land-use, development control policy that seeks to establish the specific types of development that would be permitted at (major) developed sites

in the Green Belt. As such, I see little reason why the policy would prejudice, as a matter of principle, the trunk road network. Any proposal arising at the BMSA would need to be assessed against this policy, as well as others policies of the plan (mainly those in Chapter 18). Any reasonable local planning authority would consult as necessary, including the Agency.

- 7.45 As to **Hooley Bridge (432/1 and D/5 iii.)** the objector has withdrawn his objections to 2 of the 3 sites - Site B remaining. The Proposals Map has defined an existing developed site that reflects the extent of buildings at a former mill, now sub-divided, and generally between Bamford Road and the River Roch. That definition fairly represents the extent of the built development at the mill and, as such, generally reflects the advice in Annex C to PPG 2 (Revised). Site B is a car park on the east-side of Bamford Road, opposite the former mill buildings, used by workers there. It was confirmed by the parties at the Hearing visit that the site includes a house and double garage at its north-west corner, but with no evidence from the objector that they are functionally related to the mill complex. There is some evidence of below-ground air-raid shelters adjacent to Bamford Road, but these are unobtrusive. Almost all the site is, therefore, devoid of buildings and it has not been laid out as a car park (albeit approved for that use), much being - as I saw - rough grassland. D/5 relates to **buildings** (my emphasis) of which there are none within the site related to the former mill. It would not apply to Site B. Further, any built development at the site would not represent infilling or the complete or partial redevelopment of a developed site consistent with Annex C. In my opinion, Site B - adjacent to the River Roch - is within a sensitive area of the approved Green Belt that is close to the urban edge of Heywood. It forms part of an area of countryside about the Hooley Bridge Industrial Estate and, as argued by the Council, reflects 4 of the 5 bullet points to paragraph 1.5 to PPG2 (Revised). To include Site B within D/5 iii., with the prospect of development, would conflict with national planning guidance.
- 7.46 **Then, to Tack Lea Works, Heywood (248/3 and 248/5).** I have no difficulty with the designation of this site under D/5 v.. It fairly reflects the developed area of the site, this as a building with storage to the front and west. Further, the Green Belt control resulting from the policy would assist in protecting the relatively narrow area of Green Belt between Rochdale and Bury. D/5 a) requires future development of the site to be related to its continuing use - employment (apparently manufacturing) in this case. The objector wishes to see a housing development on the site and considers that the site is unsatisfactory for the current operation - albeit no detailed information has been submitted in this respect. I am not persuaded that this site - should it be vacated - would not represent a viable alternative for another employment (manufacturing) use. The site is operational and I see no convincing reason to include it within Policy D/6 that addresses redevelopment and regeneration. The objector's alternative is to define a substantial, wider area that would include land that appeared to me to be neither significantly developed nor operational - consistent with the Council's evidence. Such definition would not reflect Annex C to PPG2 (Revised).

**Recommendations:**

**7.47 I recommend that the policy be modified along the following lines:**

- **The heading to the policy should be: “INFILLING AT MAJOR, EXISTING DEVELOPED SITES IN THE GREEN BELT”, reflecting Inquiry Change 42.**
- **On the first line of the policy statement, delete “replacement or limited extension of buildings”.**
- **On the first line of the policy statement, before the word “existing” add the word “major”.**
- **The reasoned justification to the policy should refer to the need for proposals to comply with Annex C to PPG2 (Revised).**

**D/6 - Redevelopment and Regeneration of the Rainshore Mill Complex, Norden, Rochdale**

**Objection:**

381/13

Government Office North West

**Key Issue:**

- **the acceptable wording of the policy, taking into account PPG2 (Revised).**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.48 At Policy D/6 B) of my Report, I deal with the objections relating to Rainshore Mill. There, I conclude that it should be treated as a major, existing developed site in the Green Belt. The Council accepts that the heading of the policy should be modified through Inquiry Change 48 - to reflect its view that the site should be considered as a major, existing developed site in the Green Belt. I agree. Inquiry Change 49, that would provide a reference to Annex C of PPG2 (Revised), is also reasonable.

7.49 Next, to the requirement in the penultimate paragraph of the policy statement for accompanying documents. They should be considered as providing information, the content of which may be a material consideration in determining planning applications. The plan would need to be read as a whole, including the reasoned justification to policies. I see no convincing reason why, on this objection, a reference to the documents (and why they should be available) in the reasoned justification would prejudice a proper assessment of proposals. Here, paragraph 7.18 should be expanded to include more detailed reference to D/6 f) to j).

7.50 Finally, at Revised Deposit Draft, I see that the Council has corrected the policy reference in the first sentence of paragraph 7.15.

**Recommendations:**

**7.51 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:**

- **Modify the plan in accordance with Inquiry Changes 48 and 49, but amended to reflect my conclusions on Policy D/6 A) below.**
- **Modify the reasoned justification at paragraph 7.18 to reflect paragraph 7.49 above.**

**D/6 - Redevelopment and Regeneration of Rainshore Mill Complex, Norden, Rochdale: Tack Lea Works (Omission)**

**Objection:** 248/4 Peel Investments (North) Ltd

**Key Issue:**

- **should Tack Lea Works be included under this policy?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.52 I have dealt with issues relating to this objection at paragraph 7.46 above. There is no justification for this site to be the subject of D/6.

**Recommendation:**

**7.53 I recommend that:**

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

**D/6 A) – Healey Hall Mills, Dell Road, Rochdale**

<b>Objections:</b>	1/1	Mr C Larkins
	53/1	Mr T Hoyle
	191/1	Ms D Aquatias
	287/1	Friends of Healey Dell
	288/1	Mr C Belgeonne
	2891	Ms C Downey
	295/1	Ms E Clutterbuck

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359/1	Healey Dell Properties & David McLean Homes
359/202	Healey Dell Properties & David McLean Homes
364/1	Ms K Howell-Siemens
378/1	Mr G Aquatias
444/1	I & K Sharples

### Key Issue:

- **should land at Healey Hall Mills be included within the UDP as a (major), existing developed site in the Green Belt, suitable for redevelopment and regeneration for other purposes?**

### Inspector's Reasoning:

- 7.54 To begin, **Healey Hall Mills, Dell Road (HHM)** was included in the Deposit Draft version of the UDP as a developed site in the Green Belt where, generally, its redevelopment or re-use for housing and associated environmental improvements would be permitted. The Proposals Map included land on both sides of the River Spodden - that to the east being a housing allocation under Policy H/2(d). At Revised Deposit Draft, both designations were deleted - this effected through Proposed Map Change 7/7. For the avoidance of doubt on this site, I need to clarify one matter. At Deposit Draft stage, there were a number of objections to the UDP of HHM as a developed site - relevant objections listed above. They were not withdrawn at Revised Deposit Draft. While then, effectively, supporters of the plan at Revised Deposit Draft, they appeared at the Inquiry - at their request - to tell me their concerns on their outstanding objections.
- 7.55 **I do not support the Council's Revised Deposit Draft position.** Its Deposit Draft intentions in the UDP for HHM were a reasonable response to the Inspector's Report following the Inquiry into objections to the adopted plan. There, the Inspector acknowledged the publication of PPG2 (Revised) and its provisions at Annex C relating to major existing developed sites. He came to the view, generally, that the Council should take the opportunity of adopting positive policies for the future of developed sites. I have no reason to disagree. Rochdale - an industrial town with a substantial textile tradition - includes a number of mill complexes outside its urban areas and which have been included within the approved Green Belt.
- 7.56 That was reasonably reflected in the Deposit Draft version of the UDP as it applied to HHM. Annex C to PPG2 (Revised) does not define a "major" developed site - albeit the examples given in paragraph C1 are referred to as "substantial". Each case would, therefore, need to be considered on its merits and - in the context of Rochdale - I consider that this extensive site should be

considered as subject to the guidance in Annex C. Some past demolition has taken place at the former mill complex, that has a low tenancy rate and a declining number of tenants. The Council did not significantly dispute the evidence of an objector that there was little reasonable prospect of the reoccupation of the remaining buildings for employment purposes - sufficient to produce a rental income that would enable their refurbishment.

- 7.57 As to the tests in Annex C of national planning guidance, the Council acknowledged that a housing development would be able to take place that reflected it - generally brought forward through D/6 and indicatively demonstrated by an objector at the Inquiry. Consistent with the Deposit Draft policy, that would locate built development for housing on the east side of the Spodden at the existing buildings. The area to the west - containing a range of much less substantial buildings and structures - has largely regenerated as part of this wooded valley. It would be intended to return that "to nature". The existing footprint of buildings to the east of the Spodden would be likely to be reduced. Although no specific proposal was before me, I record these matters to indicate that - in my view - the development control process would be able to secure a development that reflected the requirements of D/6 at Deposit Draft stage.
- 7.58 Now, the effect of a development on the character and appearance of the wider area. HHM is within a wooded valley that falls to the Spodden. Mill complexes outside the urban area are not an unusual feature of river valleys in Rochdale, but the existing buildings here make a limited contribution to this valley. While I share the view of the Council that HHM would not be suitable for a modern estate layout, I am satisfied that the design process would be able to secure a development that reflected the character and appearance of the area. Here, the existing buildings remaining have little visible cohesion and the complex is not listed. It would be reasonable to expect a proposal to establish, through design of buildings and their materials, a development that would rest comfortably within Healey Dell. That would be a matter for the Council in the assessment of any specific proposal, not before me at the Inquiry.
- 7.59 I do not share, therefore, the Council and a number of objectors' views that a housing development would negatively impact on the character of the area. As to concerns on its ecological value, they were far from convincing. HHM is part of a Recreational Management Area (RE/7) about the Spodden at Healey Dell Local Nature Reserve and environs and within a wider area of ecological importance. The Council did not materially contest the ecological assessment of an objector that a housing development on the eastern part of HHM would not raise any substantial ecological objections. Here, for example, no bat roosts had been identified in the buildings there. While bats, I was told, forage in the area - relevant mitigation measures for any roosts identified would be able to be implemented by accepted planning control mechanisms.

- 7.60 Part of the Council's case, and that of objectors at Deposit Draft, was concern over disturbance arising from occupants of a housing development. I am not impressed. HHM is already used by a number of businesses with related "comings and goings". That number would be able to increase at existing buildings and without any further planning permissions. Here, it is the clear intention of the Council to increase the number of visitors to the Local Nature Reserve (that has a visitor/information centre), as demonstrated by 2 "brown" directional signs to the north and south of the site. Neither of those matters rest comfortably with Council and objector concern. I see no convincing reason why occupants of any potential houses at HHM would be less respectful of their surroundings than visitors to the nature reserve, or those people at the employment units working there. Rather the contrary, my assessment being that potential residential occupiers at this attractive environment, would be likely to wish to see it preserved. The Council did not argue that existing residential occupation at Healey Dell had adversely affected any nature conservation interest.
- 7.61 As to access, the Deposit Draft version of the policy at D/6 e) required a suitable access and off site highway/junction improvements. This would be from the south along Dell Road, presently far from satisfactory as I saw - and experienced - on a number of occasions. The evidence of an objector was that an acceptable and improved access would be possible from the south - not disputed by the Council. It accepted sufficient control would be established by D/6 e). There would also be a benefit, therefore, for existing users of Dell Road, outside the site.
- 7.62 Then, to the availability of services. Potential residents exiting the site along Dell Road (to the north into Rossendale Council's area) would have limited access to services within a reasonable walking and cycling distance - this taking into account gradients. The main service concentration would be on Shawclough Road, about its junctions with Bentley Street and New Street - that including a small convenience store; Post Office; newsagent; "chippy"; as well as a hairdresser. There is a reasonable bus service along the B3677 but, fairly, being likely to be somewhat unattractive to residents at HHM taking into account the distance to the road and the nature of the walk. While these matters, overall, concern me, my balance of judgement is to give greater weight to the benefits arising from the redevelopment and regeneration of this site.
- 7.63 On this policy, I am left with 2 matters. **Firstly**, the Council's present intentions for this site. These, generally, are the improvement of the industrial complex and the adjoining land. In support of its case, it argued the availability of funding schemes to achieve regeneration. They mainly either, represent studies of long term development and management of Healey Dell or, the availability of specific funds available to deal with derelict land. Limited progress has been made by the Council, to say the least. At cross-examination of the Council's evidence, severe reservations were established, in my view, on the applicability of some schemes to the site. The Council's evidence did not persuade me that, over the period of the UDP, its approach would be able to achieve its intentions - not least as I have

come to the opinion that HHM should be designated as a major developed site within the Green Belt. **Secondly**, I was referred to a 1994 Decision by a colleague Inspector (Ref: T/APP/P4225/A/93/223795/P5). That Inspector dismissed an appeal for residential development at HHM. On the basis of the limited information made available, the specific circumstances of that case are not directly comparable to the relevant objections before me. It preceded both the Inspector's Report on the adopted plan and the publication of PPG2 (Revised). The highway evidence indicates an acceptable access along Dell Road would be able to be established. I am also referred to paragraph 14 of that Decision. For the reasons set out above, taking into account the present national and local planning context, I have come to a different assessment.

7.64 In summary, therefore, the Council was correct at Deposit Draft stage. It provided an acceptable means for the regeneration of this site. The Revised Deposit Draft version of the plan has, clearly, not been justified. I shall recommend accordingly. Here, for consistency with national planning guidance, the policy should refer to "major" developed sites - now accepted by the Council. Deposit Draft Policy D/6 A) should be reinstated to the UDP, albeit I consider that the Council should consider whether the intent of D/6 f) to j) and the last paragraph of the policy should be confined to the reasoned justification.

**Recommendation:**

**7.65 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:**

- **The Deposit Draft version of Policy D/6, at D/6 A) should be reinstated to the UDP.**
- **The heading to the policy should be: "REDEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION OF MAJOR, EXISTING DEELOPED SITES IN THE GREEN BELT FOR OTHER PURPOSES."**
- **The Council is advised to consider the last part of paragraph 7.64 above.**

**D/6 B) - Rainshore Mill, Over Town Lane, Norden**

<b>Objections:</b>	64/1	Mr J Richardrdson
	181/2	Mrs J Astridge
	181/202	Mrs J Astridge
	258/1	Mr A Harrison
	258/201	Mr A Harrison
	286/1	Mrs G Patterson
	286/202	Mrs G Patterson
	294/1	Mr J Emmerson
	303/1	Ms D Potts

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304/1	Ms C Waterfield
304/201	Ms C Waterfield
367/1	Mrs C Alty
382/1	Norden Development Opposition Group
382/202	Norden Developemnt Opposition Group
448/2	K Nadduck
454/1	Mr D Tomkinson
510/201	Mrs L Emmerson

### Key Issue:

- **should the Rainshore Mill (RM) complex be identified as a major, existing developed site within the Green Belt, allowing redevelopment and regeneration?**

### Inspector's Reasoning:

- 7.66 In summary, I come to a similar general conclusion as that on Healey Hall Mills dealt with above. To begin, RM at Norden was defined at Deposit Draft stage under Policy D/6 as 1 of 2 sites that would permit their redevelopment for housing and associated environmental improvements (the other being Healey Hall Mills). At Revised Deposit Draft, the policy was limited to RM - this addressing redevelopment and regeneration there.
- 7.67 The extensive objection site at RM is some distance from the urban area at Norden - approached along Over Town Lane from its junction with Edenfield Road. This is a largely rural passage, albeit I saw some cottages near Edenfield Road and - on the basis of my preliminary and formal site visits - other dwellings close to the site. It is part of an upland moorland landscape where, for example, a public footpath to the south of the site gives access to Greenbooth Reservoir - the area about it much used, as I saw, by walkers. The effect of this UDP proposal on the character and appearance of the area was one of the main concerns of local residents.
- 7.68 The first matter on which I need to come to a view upon is whether the site should be considered as a major, existing developed site in the Green Belt, reflecting Annex C to PPG2 (Revised). As at Healey Hall Mills, I consider that it should and Inquiry Change No 48 would amend the policy title accordingly - Inquiry Change 49 to the reasoned justification reasonably reflecting Annex C. Bearing in mind the Inspector's Report into the adopted plan and the Rochdale context of a number of former employment complexes within the rural/Green Belt part of the Borough, together with the size of the site, RM should fairly be described as substantial. It comprises a range of buildings, some relatively modern in appearance - others of an older vintage. Bluntly, a "hotch-potch" of buildings has arisen at the site that make a limited contribution to the character and appearance of this attractive upland landscape. To all intents and purposes, the complex is redundant and derelict and I share the Council's assessment of it in paragraph 7.17

of the plan. Having seen all the buildings on my accompanied site visit, I doubt whether they would be an attractive proposition for a conversion to a modern use(s). Here, however, I was not persuaded that a comprehensive and extended marketing exercise had taken place with the intent of securing reoccupation. This was, somewhat, balanced by the Council's evidence of the limitations of the site location (some distance from main communication links) together with limited site inquiries for new uses. Having considered all the evidence, I consider there to be little likelihood - over the period of the UDP - of a comprehensive use of the site, the best prospect being unneighbourly uses to a varying degree. A general thrust of the UDP is to secure regeneration within urban areas - supported in this Report. That should not exclude regeneration in other parts of the Borough. This site offers the potential for that and, to which, I give considerable weight.

- 7.69 The, reasonable, prospect before me is - therefore - further decline at the site. I see little in national planning guidance to advise a decision-maker that, that, is an accepted approach - taking into account the nature of the site. That takes me to the countryside and character/appearance implications of the policy. Firstly, I see from the Proposals Map that a Designated Site of Ecological Importance, in 2 parts, is to the north-west of the site. Here, objectors did not persuade me that the former employment occupation at the site had, or would if continued, adversely affect that interest. It would be reasonable for me to come to a similar view on residential occupation at Rainshore Mill, occupants being likely to respect their surroundings. Further, the development control process would be likely to establish a housing scheme that rested comfortably in this landscape, bearing in mind the present nature of the site. In my opinion, continued decline at the site with no reasonable likelihood of reoccupation does not represent an attractive prospect.
- 7.70 Next to sustainability. Apart from the public house at the junction of Over Town Land and Edenfield Road, other services are in Norden - with a somewhat limited bus service along Edenfield Road, some distance from the site. From the site entrance to a convenience store in the centre of Norden, I recorded a distance of slightly less than one mile. Walking to services would be unlikely in most cases - as would cycling access, taking into account the gradients involved. While these matters weigh against the plan proposal, the site is previously-developed.
- 7.71 Next, to highway/traffic implications. Although D/6 e) requires suitable access and highway/junction improvements, these matters were debated at the Hearing session. The existing and extensive mill complex has an authorized employment use. That could be resumed, or indeed intensified, albeit an unlikely prospect. The Revised Deposit Draft version of the plan estimates 40 dwellings - reasonable for me to consider the implications of that.
- 7.72 Although Over Town Lane varies in width from Edenfield Road, sufficient warning would be available of approaching vehicles while the Council told me that improvements would be possible along it. My main concern relates to the

junction with the main road. A minor road distance of 2.4 metres would not, in my view, achieve the required visibility splay to the right for exiting vehicles - this due to adjacent properties, although the Council further argued that traffic calming measures would be possible on Edenfield Road. On the basis of my site observations, a minor road distance of 2.0 metres would also be problematical. No specific development proposal is, however, before me. Taking that into account, and also D/6 e), it would be unreasonable of me to recommend the deletion of Policy D/6 on that basis. Sufficient control would be available through the development control process. Taking all the above matters into account, my clear balance of judgement is that the plan should be supported to secure the regeneration and redevelopment of Rainshore Mill.

**Recommendation:**

**7.73 I recommend that the plan should be amended along the following lines:**

- **It should proceed on the basis of paragraph 7.51 above, Policy D/6 including both Healey Hall Mills and Rainshore Mill.**
- **Modify the plan in accordance with the intent of Inquiry Changes 48 and 49, reflecting paragraph 7.51 above.**

**D/8 – Replacement of Dwellings in the Green Belt**

**Objection:** 381/14 Government Office North West

**Key Issue:**

- **should the policy reflect national planning guidance in PPG2 (Revised)?**

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.74 I understand the Council's view that, generally, the wording of the policy has the same intent as that argued by the objector. Nonetheless, the content of national planning guidance is to establish and define that which constitutes inappropriate development. For the avoidance of doubt, and in the interests of consistency, I support the objection - subject to a wording that reflects paragraph 3.6 of national planning guidance.

**Recommendation:**

**7.75 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:**

- **The first 2 lines of the policy should be modified as follows: “The replacement of existing dwellings in the Green Belt need not be inappropriate, provided that proposals meet all the following criteria...”**

#### **D/9 – Re-use and Adaptation of Buildings in Rural Areas**

<b>Objections:</b>	37/2	North West Tourist Board
	381/1	Government Office North West

#### **Key Issues:**

- **is the policy too restrictive, particularly in requiring that an application building should be of permanent and substantial construction?**
- **should the policy require development proposals to be accompanied by supporting details?**

#### **Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.76 **37/2** relates, in my view, to criterion b) of the policy. The rural areas of the Borough, as defined by the Council, include both Green Belt and remaining countryside. In my view, the general thrust of the policy fairly reflects both PPG2 (Revised) and the 4<sup>th</sup> bullet point to paragraph 17 of PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas - the UDP needing to reflect that. On this objection, any proposal arising that did not comply with the policy would need to be assessed in the light of all material considerations.

7.77 As to **381/1**, the details specified in the bracketed section of criterion c) should be considered as providing information - the content of which may be likely to be a material consideration in determining planning applications. They should be included within the reasoned justification - where I see no convincing reason why that would prejudice a proper assessment of proposals. The UDP would need to be considered as a whole, including the reasoned justification to policies.

7.78 Finally, and not the subject of objection, I comment on the last paragraph of the policy statement. **I have read it repeatedly and still do not understand its intention** (my emphasis). As such, it would be reasonable for me to conclude that neither would potential developers. That is unsatisfactory. If it is a clarification of part of the policy, then it should be redrafted and included within the reasoned justification.

#### **Recommendations:**

**7.79 I recommend that the plan be modified along the following lines:**

- Delete the last sentence of criterion c) and include its intent within the reasoned justification.
- The Council is advised to modify the plan to reflect paragraphs 7.76 to 7.78 above, and also paragraph 7.23 of the UDP to reflect PPS7.

#### **D/10 – Protected Open Land**

<b>Objections:</b>	98/9	Countryside Agency North West
	248/6	Peel Investments (North) Ltd
	387/1	Mr F Toniolo
	442/13	Redrow Homes (Lancashire) Ltd & Bellway Homes (North West) Ltd

#### **Key Issues:**

- should the policy clarify its coverage and relationship with other policies?
- should Green Belt land be designated under this policy as a reserve of development land?

#### **Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.80 I have some sympathy for the view of the **Countryside Agency** that the geographical coverage of the policy should be clarified. Substantial areas of land are the subject of Protected Open Land (POL). The development plan process should establish certainty. In response to the objection, the Council at Revised Deposit Draft has changed the Key Panel to the Proposals Map to indicate the land to which the POL policy relates. It is not, however, the subject of a specific notation on the Proposals Map. In my view, confusion would be likely to result. To avoid this, the areas of POL should be shown on the Proposals Map, with an addition to the Key that would be accompanied by the explanatory wording intended by the Council. The policy would then be reworded, its explanation of the land to which the policy relates being included within the reasoned justification. Further, it is not unusual for land in a development plan to be the subject of a number of specific area-based policies. Generally, in this UDP, their intent is sufficiently clear and all would need to be taken into account in the assessment of any development proposal, including any landscape implications. The objector has not told me how it would wish the policies to which it refers should be modified. Finally, the policy sets out to indicate the types of development that would be permitted, the reference in paragraph 7.26 to farm diversification being an example. It is acceptable as such.

7.81 The land to the north of Hareshill Road (**248/6**) is approved Green Belt (outside the DUA) established in the adopted plan and carried forward into the UDP. I have already concluded that no exceptional circumstances exist to remove it from

the Green Belt. As such, the site should not be identified under Policy D/10 as requested by the objector. Here, any review of Green Belt boundaries within Rochdale would need to take place within a Greater Manchester context, Regional Planning Guidance indicating that there is no need for a strategic study of Green Belt within the conurbation at the present time (Policy SD5). As to the POL defined in the UDP, it may well be that some of this may be necessary to meet a development need beyond the plan period while, during it, I have come to a conclusion in Chapter 9 of my Report. The former, beyond the plan period, **may** (my emphasis) require a review of the Green Belt and areas of POL. That would, however, be conditioned by the ongoing RPG process and any review of PPG2 (Revised).

- 7.82 **Land at Greenvale, Bamford (387/1)** is part of an extensive area of approved Green Belt countryside between the towns of Heywood, Rochdale and Bury - the boundary being tightly drawn adjacent to properties on the edge of Bamford. I agree with the Council's evidence that the land reflects 4 of the 5 bullet points that identify the purposes of including land within the Green Belt [paragraph 1.5 to PPG 2 (Revised)]. Its continued inclusion within the Green Belt reflects the appeal decisions to which I have been referred. Generally, the objector considers that the land should be considered, and safeguarded, as suitable for housing development should there be a need to increase land supply. In Chapter 9 of my Report, I conclude that any additional supply should exclude Green Belt land. The objector has not demonstrated exceptional circumstances sufficient for me to recommend a modification to Green Belt boundaries in the light of long established national planning guidance, generally reflected in the UDP. Here, I have taken into account that which the objector tells me is the potential for housing development of land to the east of the site - and owned by the Council.
- 7.83 The general requirement of these objectors (**442/13**) is that the policy should establish the areas safeguarded for future development and not protected for environmental reasons. Taking into account my conclusion on housing land supply at Chapter 9, POL would need to be the subject of the assessment I recommend. Environmental considerations would be part of that.

#### **Recommendations:**

- 7.84 **I recommend that the plan should be modified along the following lines:**
- **The Proposals Map be modified by the inclusion of a notation defining areas of Protected Open Land, together with an addition to the Key.**
  - **The first 3 lines of the policy be modified as follows: "Within the areas of Protected Open land defined on the Proposals Map, development proposals will be permitted that fall within one or more of the following categories:"**

- The reasoned justification to the policy should indicate the general extent of the areas of Protected Open Land.

**Chapter 7 – Land between Oldham Road and New Broad Lane (Omission)**

**Objection:** 358/7 Bryant Homes Ltd

**Key Issue:**

- should a new policy be introduced that would safeguard this land for future residential development?

**Inspector's Reasoning:**

7.85 No. At Revised Deposit Draft, the land was appropriately outside the Defined Urban Area. Reasonably - in the light of my conclusions on housing land supply at Chapter 9 - the site would be part of the assessment that the Council is recommended to undertake.

**Recommendation:**

7.86 I recommend that:

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

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