



CHORLTON PLANNING LTD

Town Planning & Development Consultants

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

**PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (12 HOUSES) IN A WOODLAND
SETTING WITH THE MANAGEMENT OF THE WOODLANDS, INCLUDING
SUBSTANTIAL ADDITIONAL TREE PLANTING, AND ASSOCIATED
LANDSCAPING TO ENHANCE THE WILDLIFE HABITAT, AND
IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC ACCESS**

**SUMMERSHADES, OLDHAM ROAD,
GRASSCROFT, OLDHAM**

PLANNING STATEMENT

Prepared by Chorlton Planning Ltd

on behalf of

**SUMMERSHADES DEVELOPMENT LTD and TRUSTEES OF THE
SUMMERSHADES TRUST**

**A2390
30.11.23**

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1.0 THE PURPOSE OF THIS STATEMENT

1.1 A full planning application is submitted for development on part of the former Summershades Caravan Park site, off Oldham Road, Grasscroft.

1.2 The application is for limited residential development which will enable the future management of the surrounding woodland and the enhancement of its wildlife habitat.

1.3 The purpose of this report is to provide information in support of the above proposals. It should be read in conjunction with the Design and Access Statement (DAS) prepared by architects CJ Partnership Ltd and other consultant's reports referred to in the following text.

1.4 Some time ago we held a public exhibition at the White Hart Inn where draft proposals of a similar scheme were displayed. The meeting was well attended by residents who live around the site. Members of the Summershades Trust and Alan Chorlton, of Chorlton Planning Ltd, were in attendance to explain the proposals and answer questions.

1.5 A pre application meeting was held with Dean Clapworthy, senior planning officer, in May 2020 but no written report has been received.

1.6 Further work taking into account of the feedback from the exhibition and from Mr Clapworthy has been carried out on the development potential of the site with concept layout plans and supporting information prepared by the CJ Partnership, architects.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 The site is the former Summershades Caravan Park, which in the 1950's successfully operated as an out of town leisure centre, providing on site leisure and entertainment facilities in an attractive rural setting for residents of the nearby urban areas of Oldham, Ashton and Manchester. An aerial photograph taken in 1955 – Photograph A below - shows this. Further information on the history of the site is provided in the DAS.

2.2 The overall site is some 2.22 hectares in size. It has a moderate upward slope rising from Oldham Road in a northerly direction. It has the appearance of a woodland area, with the density of the trees being higher in the south, close to Oldham Road, whilst to the north the tree cover is sparse and intermittent. Although some of the trees were planted by a previous owner, most are self-seeded and there has been little maintenance of these over the years.

2.3 The site has vehicular access from Oldham Road. Public footpath access is also available through and from around the site. A number of streams and watercourses cross the site and some of the structures that were parts of the Summershades Caravan Park are still evident.

2.4 To the west of the site is the Summershades/Burnedge Lane residential estate, to the north is open land, beyond which is open countryside. To the east and south is residential development, fronting onto Oldham Road and Parkfield Road. A small development of 4

detached houses off Oldham Road, adjacent to the access road to the site, has recently been completed.

2.5 A location plan is attached at Document No. 1

3.0 LANDSCAPE CONTEXT

3.1 This part of Grasscroft is suburban in character with low to medium density houses spreading out on both sides of Oldham Road. Spacious gardens have allowed for the growth of hedges, shrubs and trees that have resulted in an attractive suburban landscape that is the defining characteristic of the area.

3.2 Historically, ribbon development along Oldham Road came first. The 1955 aerial Photograph A taken in 1955 shows this.



Photograph A

3.3 This was followed by a wide sweep of new medium density residential development to the north of the Oldham Road properties centred on Summershades Lane and Burnedge Lane on what was formerly agricultural land.

3.4 Other residential development centred on Parkfield Road has taken place to the north of Oldham Road and to the east of the application site with more recent residential development further east – Grasscroft Heights and Fern Hill - off Oldham Road.

The plan attached at Document No.2 shows the present situation.

3.5 Oldham Road itself is an attractive wide highway with substantial grass verges containing mature trees. The semi and detached houses are set well back within generous gardens producing an attractive treelined boulevard appearance. Photograph B shows this.



Photograph B

3.6 The other later development behind Oldham Road is of medium density but contains hedges, trees and shrubs which maintains the suburban character.

3.7 Due to the topography, this part of Grasscroft is only accessible to long distance view from across the Tame Valley, eg. from Friezland Lane where the area is seen as a well wooded area with intermittent buildings. Photograph C shows this.

3.8 The southern part of the application site, fronting onto Oldham Road, is covered in a dense cluster of mainly self-seeded trees. Apart from the slight widening of the existing access road, this tree cover will remain resulting in the proposed housing to the north not being readily visible from Oldham Road. The landscape frontage to Oldham Road will then be maintained but may benefit from selective thinning as part of the woodland management proposals. Photographs D and E show this



Photograph C



Photograph D



Photograph E

4.0 DEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

4.1 The development concept is to provide low density housing amongst the existing trees together with additional tree planting and landscaping to create a high-quality living environment for family houses. Custom build housing is proposed as part of the scheme to meet demand for this type of housing in Saddleworth and Oldham. Whilst an indicative number of custom-built houses are proposed in the application the final number will depend on demand; it could be more.

4.2 A green space corridor will flow through the central part of the site. This will accommodate the existing stream and introduce ponds and other water features to encourage wildlife. Additions and improvements to the existing footpath system will also be made as part of the scheme.

4.3 The dwellings will not be obtrusive as they will become part of the woodland landscape. The woodland area, the watercourses and the footpaths will be properly managed and safe public access will be designed into the scheme.

4.4 The development will be in effect “houses in a woodland setting” and become part of the general landscape of this part of Grasscroft. A key part of the scheme is to ensure that the trees – existing and proposed - and the changing landscape are maintained and managed both now and into the future.

5.0 THE PROPOSALS

5.1 The proposals are for attractive family houses of contemporary design sited within the existing woodland area. Trees to be removed to accommodate the development will be replaced with a greater number of new trees within the site. The existing woodland and open space will be improved and managed which, along with the new planting and landscaping, will introduce a diverse habitat that will sustain and encourage wildlife.

5.2 Full plans prepared by architects CJ Partnership are included in the application.

5.3 Twelve detached houses spread about the site are proposed. The position, setting and design are such that the overall loss of existing trees will be minimal. Privacy distances are respected between proposed and existing houses. The general pattern and layout is similar in character, when looked at in plan form, to the Summershades/Burnedge Lane development to the west, but lower density. The houses are of contemporary design with flat or gently sloping roofs - some will be grass covered. The design of the houses will have the appearance of chalets or lodges within the woodland area, reflective of the historic use of the site as a leisure park. The external walls will be faced in local stone, timber and glass.

5.4 It is proposed that a number of the houses will be ‘custom build’ to allow purchasers to have an input into the initial designs in order to introduce individuality. To ensure that there is continuity of character to the development both now and in the future a design brief (design code) to include the key elements of the overall design will be drawn up and agreed with the local planning authority. All future purchasers will be required to sign up to this.

5.5 Access to the development will be an extension of the existing access to the site from Oldham Road. The existing surfaced area will be widened to accommodate the new development. Within the site the vehicular access road will have sharp curves to take advantage of the levels and minimise disturbance to trees and other features on the site. The road will be 5.5 metres wide with pavement where appropriate. However, advantage will be taken of the levels to create separate footpaths through the trees, including some along the historic routes.

5.6 The existing public footpaths across and around the site will be maintained but new footpaths to increase public access will also be provided.

5.7 Highway issues are addressed in a Technical Note prepared by SCP Traffic Engineers

5.8 The dense tree planting fronting onto Oldham Road will be largely untouched although it may be thinned out as part of the woodland management proposals. A number of trees within the central part of the site will need to be removed – mainly non-native trees (mostly sycamores) – but will be replaced with new native species planting amongst the houses and elsewhere on the site.

5.9 The upper part of the site is less densely wooded and much more open in character.

5.10 A green space corridor will be introduced in the central part of the site to accommodate the existing stream and new wildlife/continuation ponds.

5.11 New footpaths will be created to improve public access.

5.12 Trees removed for development will be replaced on a three for one basis. The northern parts of the site will be the subject of significant additional tree planting.

5.13 Native trees and other vegetation will be introduced to produce an attractive landscape and also encourage a greater diversity of wildlife.

5.14 A Preliminary Ecology Assessment has been carried out by JCA Ltd Ecology Consultants. Existing wild life will be protected where possible during the development phase and the landscaping scheme will include an enhanced habitat to encourage an increase in wildlife, particularly around the water features.

5.15 An Arboricultural Survey, Impact Assessment and Arboricultural Method Statement has been prepared by Mulberry. A Woodland Management Plan has also been produced by Mulberry.

5.16 A full Landscaping Scheme and Landscape Visual Impact Assessment has been produced by PGLA Ltd Landscape Architects.

5.17 The integral building and open space development will significantly enhance the currently unmanaged woodland area. To ensure that the site, in particular the trees, water features and footpaths are managed into the future, a Management Company including all the occupiers of the new houses will be formed. The content of the company responsibilities will be agreed with the Council.

6.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

6.1 National guidance on planning issues is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Chapter 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development states:

“the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development....

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system’s three overarching objectives, which are inter-dependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right place and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and co-ordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- b) A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities, health, social and cultural well-being; and*

c) An environmental objective – to protect and enhance a natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.

6.2 Oldham’s planning policies are contained within the Oldham Local Development Framework, Development Plan Document – Joint Core Strategy and a Development Management Policies Document (LDF) adopted in November 2011.

6.3 The part of the application site proposed for development is designated as Other Protected Open Land on the LDF Proposals Map. Its reference is OPOL 21. The northern part of the site, which will be left open, is within the Green Belt.

6.4 The trees on site are the subject of an historic Tree Preservation Order.

6.5 The following Oldham LDF planning policies that will need to be addressed:

Policy 1 – Climate change and sustainable development.

Policy 3 – An address of choice.

Policy 6 – Green infrastructure.

Policy 9 – Local environment.

Policy 10 – Affordable housing.

Policy 11 – Housing.

Policy 18 – Energy.

Policy 19 – Water and Flooding.

Policy 20 – Design.

Policy 21 – Protecting natural environmental assets.

Policy 22 – Protecting open land.

Policy 24 – Historic environment.

Policy 25 - Developer Contributions

6.6 The following ‘saved’ UDP policy is relevant:-

Policy D1.5 – Protection of Trees on Development Sites

6.7 The emerging Places for Everyone Plan (PFE) and the Oldham Housing Strategy 2019 are also relevant.

6.8 Looking at the Oldham LDF Policies in turn:

6.9 LDF Policies 1 and 3 seek to control the release and use of land to prioritise development on previously developed sites. They also require residential development to be in locations that are suitable and accessible to services, including access to means of transport other than the private car.

6.10 LDF Policy 11 seeks to meet Oldham's housing needs and demands by focusing residential development in sustainable and accessible locations, whilst ensuring that the borough's Green Belt is maintained and that development respects the natural built and historic environment. The main aim of Policy 11 is to ensure that a range of sites are available to accommodate different house types and tenures throughout the borough.

6.11 Sites are allocated for residential development on the LDF Proposals Map, but the policy allows for "windfall" sites which have not previously been identified for development.

6.12 These sites provide an opportunity for good quality, individually designed schemes, in accessible locations that will fit in well and provide accommodation within existing built-up areas, where services and infrastructure is already available.

6.13 The application site is ideal for family accommodation in a well-established residential area with good access to public transport and a wide range of services in the general area. The new housing will add to range and type of the borough's overall housing stock.

6.14 The site is located in a sustainable location, close to a range of key services and has good access to public transport. It is compliant with Policies 1, 3, and 11. This was accepted by the planning case officer who dealt with previous applications for the recently built 4 houses on Oldham Road and prior to this by an Appeal Inspector.

LDF Policy 10 – Affordable Housing

6.15 The policy states that:

"We want to provide homes to meet the needs and demands of all sections of the community. Provision of affordable homes is an issue across the borough, including in Saddleworth. We will work with partners and developers to ensure this need is met. Our approach to affordable housing will be based on the findings of our Affordable Housing Economic Viability Assessment (AHEVA)"

All residential development of 15 dwellings in the above, in-line with National Guidance, will be required to provide an appropriate level of affordable housing provision. The current target is for 7.5% of the total development sales value to go towards the delivery of affordable housing, unless it can be clearly demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that this is not viable. This target is based on the findings of the

AHEVA but will be monitored and reviewed over the lifetime of the LDF to ensure that it is appropriate....

The Council normally require affordable housing to be provided on site but were this is not practicable, then a financial contribution can be made towards affordable housing elsewhere.

6.16 The above has been updated to come in line with the NPPF which lowers the threshold to development of 10 or more houses. The other requirements remain basically the same.

6.17 In view of the nature of the proposed development and the location of the site, it is likely that onsite affordable housing is not practicable.

6.18 As referred to later, this issue will be discussed, along with other policy issues, whilst the application is being considered.

LDF Policy 9 – Local Environment

6.19 This policy seeks to ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact on the surrounding built or natural area, and that, in the case of residential properties, will provide a good living environment for future occupants.

6.20 The site is within a well-established residential area and will provide a quality living environment for future occupants of the proposed dwellings. The proposed houses are generously distanced from each other to observe privacy and will have ample private garden space, car parking space and garages.

6.21 The layout and detailed design of the dwelling respects the recommended privacy distances between these and the existing dwellings around the site.

6.22 With regard to ground conditions JT Booth Associates Consulting Civil and Geotechnical Engineers have provided as Phase 1 Preliminary Risk Assessment.

6.23 The investigation found that there are no landfill sites or waste disposal sites within a 250-metre radius and that the site is not in a coal mining area.

6.24 The site is considered to be relatively stable. The site reconnaissance revealed little in the way of contaminative materials, although in the location of the former dwelling and the bowling green, there had been some ground disturbance and infilling/levelling, with some minor areas of building materials in and around the ground surface. It was considered likely that the natural ground was used for reprofiling rather than imported fill, however there is a possibility that some minor contaminants maybe have been introduced into this area. Checks on site are recommended prior to building work.

LDF Policy 19 – Flood Risk

6.25 The Policy states that:

“the Council will ensure development does not result in unacceptable flood risk or drainage problems, by directing development away from areas at risk of flooding, and protecting and improving existing flood defences, water resources and quality”.

6.26 The NPPF in Chapter 14 – Meeting the Challenge of Climate Change, Flooding and Coastal Change states:

Para 164. The application of the exceptions test should be informed by a strategic or site-specific Flood Risk Assessment, depending on whether it is being applied during plan production or at the application stage. To pass the exceptions test it should be demonstrated that;

- (a) The development would provide wider sustainable benefits to the community that outweigh the flood risk.*
- (b) The development will be served for its lifetime taking account of the vulnerability of its users, without increasing flood risk elsewhere, and, where possible, will reduce flood risk overall.*

6.27 A Flood Risk and Drainage Strategy has been prepared by TJ Booth Associates, Consulting Civil & Geotechnical Engineers. The report concludes;

“.....that the site will be safe from flood risk in the local area and will not contribute additional risks due to the development proposals.

.....the site is outside of the flood zones and will be safe from minor surface water runoff in the local area up to and including extreme rainfall events.

Drainage from the proposed site will be in full accordance with the NPPF and SUDS will be utilised to limit the amount of flow from site proposals to pre-development green field QBAR rates.

Existing drainage surveys and assessments will need to be undertaken in due course and detailed drainage designs following the principles set out in the document.

6.28 It is noted that two streams run across the site. These will need to be investigated and managed and will be incorporated into the landscaping and water features.

6.29 Small ponds are proposed as part of the landscaping, and these will attenuate the water flow.

LDF Policy 20 – Design

6.30 This policy recognises the contribution that good quality design can make to regeneration and sustainable development. The policy states that:-

“the Council will promote high quality design and sustainable construction of developments that reflect the character and distinctiveness of the local area, communities and sites across Oldham.”

6.31 NPPF CHAPTER 12 Achieving Well Designed Places, states;

Para 126. The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps makes development acceptable to communities....

Para 130. Planning Policies and Designs that planning decisions should ensure that developments;

- (a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- (b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping.*
- (c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased density);*
- (d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangements of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*
- (e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- (f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community, cohesion and resilience.*

Para 134. Development that is not well-designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes.

Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

- a) Development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes and/or*
- b) Outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability or help raise the standard of design more generally in an*

area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.

6.32 The concept is to provide detached new houses within the existing woodland setting. The houses will be of modern high-quality design; their shape and positioning will reflect the historic use of the site which was for leisure purposes - chalets in the woods.

6.33 The housing development is an integral part of the improvement of the overall quality of the woodland area, including water courses, footpaths etc and an enhanced wildlife habitat.

6.34 A key aim of the proposals are to ensure that the retained and new trees on the overall site are properly managed and maintained into the future. Some 60% of trees on site are non-native trees. This is especially so in the central part of the site where development is to take place, This is also where the highest concentration of Rhododendron and Himalayan Balsam are located. Trees removed will be compensated by re-planting of native species on a 3 to 1 basis elsewhere on the site.

6.35 A green space corridor will be introduced covering the middle portion of the site. This will include the water features, public access via footpaths that traverse the site.

6.36 The architect and landscape architect have worked together to produce a cohesive design covering both the new build and existing and proposed natural features of the site. The land will have increased public access and an enhanced wildlife habitat that will encourage biodiversity. A key feature is that the site will be managed by the occupiers of the houses as part of an agreed management plan.

6.37 At present the overgrown and unmanaged site, can be oppressive and feel unsafe. Trees and tree branches sometimes fall without warning. The management plan will include regular inspection of the trees, especially those close to public footpaths.

6.38 The design of the scheme will, whilst improving public access, also improve public safety and the occupiers of the new houses will provide surveillance to reduce the fear of crime and antisocial behaviour.

6.39 It is hoped that we can engage with the Council's arboricultural department on the above. The proposals have also been discussed with The Woodland Trust. It is hoped to work with The Trust on the replanting and management plans. The Forestry Commission will also be invited to become involved.

6.40 The design is of high quality and respects its context and local distinctiveness and as such is compliant with this policy.

LDF Policy 6 Green Infrastructure and LDF Policy 21 Protecting Natural Environmental Assets.

6.41 These policies aim to protect, conserve and enhance local natural environments, Green Infrastructure, biodiversity, geodiversity and landscapes.

6.42 The Council aims to enhance the local natural environment and provide new and enhanced green infrastructure.

6.43 The policy states that;

Development proposals, where appropriate, must;

- *protect and maximise opportunities for green infrastructure at or near the site.*
- *protect, conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, designated nature conservation sites, legally protected species and their habitats and local nature reserves.*

6.44 The site contains scrub type ground cover and a large number of shrubs and trees, particularly in the lower areas..

6.45 A Preliminary Ecology Appraisal has been prepared by JCA Limited and is submitted with this application.

6.46 No evidence of aquatic life (great crested newts or other reptiles, otters, water voles, beavers), pole cats, brown hares or hedgehogs were found. However, the site has potential for bat roosts. Some 23 species of birds have been recorded around the site and birds' nests identified in trees within the woodland areas. It is also possible that badgers inhabit the site.

6.47 Further surveys for the presence of bats and badgers need to take place at appropriate times.

6.48 The proposals, in particular the landscaping and planting proposals, are designed to encourage local wildlife species and increase the biodiversity of the whole site.

6.49 A bio-diversity enhancement plan will be prepared and implemented in response to a planning condition. This will cover pre and post construction during the landscape phase of the development. The bio-diversity enhancement plan will identify opportunities to retain and enhance local wildlife habitats, to encourage existing and new wildlife to the site and the areas around.

6.50 Careful attention to lighting in particular will minimise the effect on wildlife, in particular bats, as well as enhancing the general ambiance of the area.

UDP Saved Policy D1.5 - Trees on Development sites

6.51 The majority of trees will be retained but some will be removed to accommodate the proposed development with appropriate replacement planting elsewhere on the site.

6.52 A full tree survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement have been prepared by Mulberry and is submitted with the application.

6.53 In consultation with Oldham MBC the number of felled trees will be replaced with native species of local provenance on a three for one basis. The proposed works provide an opportunity to institute enhancement for bio-diversity through native species planting. The

landscaping plan prepared by PGLA Ltd shows native species that will benefit wildlife common in the area.

6.54 The overall result will be to retain the character of the existing woodland area but minimise the effect that the introduction of the houses, private gardens, roads etc., will have and enhance the overall appearance of the site by significant additional planting.

6.55 Planting and woodland management must be looked at over a long period. The existing and new planting, with careful management, will allow the trees, shrubs and other vegetation to achieve their optimum shape, size and maturity which will benefit the overall appearance of the woodland area over time. This is discussed in the Woodland Management Plan prepared by Mulberry. The plan looks over a period of 30 years.

6.56 Over much of the site self-seeded trees have created crowded and clustered groups of trees. Selective thinning of trees, where appropriate, over the whole site needs to be part of the woodland management plan.

6.57 During building operations the area around the retained trees will be fenced off and any work within the root protection area carried out by hand or/and by specialist contractors.

6.58 Main habitable room windows will not be close to the trees which should safeguard against requests to fell the trees in the future due to loss of light, etc.

6.59 The occupants of the new dwellings will help to provide passive surveillance to the public rights of way that cross the site and minimise anti- social behaviour. This should help to reduce crime and improve public safety.

6.60 The proposals are compliant with this policy.

Policy 22 - Protected Open Land

6.61 The proposed development part of the site is designated as Other Protected Open Land (OPOL) on the Local Development Framework (LDF) Proposals Map. Its reference is OPOL 21.

6.62 The trees on site are the subject of an historic blanket Tree Preservation Order.

6.63 Policy 22 – Other Protected Open Land states:

“The borough also has locally protected open countryside called “Other Protected Open Land (OPOL)” which aims to preserve the distinctiveness of an area.”

6.64 The policy goes on to say:-

“Development on OPOL will be permitted where it is appropriate, small scale or ancillary development located close to existing buildings within the OPOL, or which does not affect the openness, local distinctiveness or visual amenity of the OPOL, taking

in to account its cumulative impact. Where appropriate, development will be screened or landscaped to minimise its visual impact.”

6.65 Looking at the OPOL policy, the distinctiveness, which is a key part of the reason behind the OPOL designation, will be respected in that the dense woodland area in the southern part of the site will be retained and the remainder of the site enhanced by further planting with the whole site being managed and maintained, both now and in the future.

6.66 In September 2021 the Council produced an Interim Planning Paper relating to OPOL Policy. This assessed the quality of the existing 23 OPOL in the borough across a set of criteria.

6.67 As well as their open space character and value to the local community their heritage significance was also considered. The Paper stated:

‘For some sites this has identified where the historic environment, often linking to recreation, could be enhanced. Consideration will need to be given as to how these opportunities can be delivered through the Local Plan review and / or working with our partners and across council departments.’

6.68 The Summershades site, OPOL 21 was considered to meet Local Green Space criteria as follows:

‘It is considered that the site is of local significance due to richness of its wildlife and historic significance’.

6.69 The identified enhancement opportunities section stated:

“the historic significance mostly derives from the sites former use as a pleasure garden from the late 19th to mid-20th Century. Some of these features still survive. Although the site has not been maintained, there is an opportunity to restore these features and make public access easier to the site.”

6.70 The site has not been maintained properly for many years (see Woodland Management Plan) as the cost of this is simply too large for the Trust to manage. Consequently, many of the trees are crowded together, overgrown and need considerable attention, especially those that overhang public footpaths. Residents have reported dangerous branches and trees that could be a threat to pedestrians. In addition, there are a number of unmaintained water courses that cross the site making part of it boggy in places, especially around footpaths.

6.71 The various historic artefacts on the site are not being protected and are becoming overgrown and in danger of being lost.

6.72 There is a clear need to manage the trees and the woodland area in general and to carry out improvements to the drainage of the area and to the quality of the walking surfaces of the public footpaths.

6.73 As mentioned above, this will not happen as the Summershades Trust is unable to provide the necessary funds.

6.74 The proposed development, on the middle and upper land will enable a full woodland management scheme for the site to be drawn up and the trees and other features managed into the future. It will also allow maintenance of the existing water courses and additions to these that will provide attractive features for the residents of the houses and for the public in general. The public footpaths crossing the site will be maintained and improved with signage provided. The proposed landscaping, tree planting and water features will help to protect existing wildlife and enable the natural habitat to be enhanced to attract additional wildlife.

6.75 Public access to the land, including additional footpaths will be provided as part of the scheme. Furthermore, the historic significance of the site, in particular its use as a pleasure garden in the late 19th and 20th century, can be celebrated with the key features preserved and made accessible to the public, where possible. Interpretation boards can be provided at key points together with sitting areas at appropriate locations on the footpath system. The original access road to the pleasure gardens, with its avenue of protected trees, will be upgraded to create an attractive walkway.

LDF Policy 23 – Open Space and Sports

6.76 The policy states that all residential development should contribute toward the provision of new and enhanced open space unless it is neither practical, nor desirable.

6.77 The proposals include increased public access to the site and a considerably improved landscape that can be accessed by the public as well as the new residents.

6.78 Discussions with the local planning authority on this issue will take place as the application is being considered.

LDF Policy 24 – Historic Environment

6.79 The site does not contain any Listed Buildings, nor is it in a Conservation Area.

6.80 However, in view of its history, historic plans and a short report has been provided by Norman Redhead of the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit. A copy is attached at Document No.3

6.81 His report takes content from another Council report that concludes;

“although overgrown, the path to the Summershades property is still preserved as a treelined avenue. There were also elements of stonework visible in the woodland which appeared to be related to the former buildings as well. In addition, there was also a raised area which still had partially surviving steps which probably led to the former bowling green”.

6.82 The proposals include the retention and enhancement of the treelined access. This will become a pedestrian only route. The steps will be maintained and other artifacts in and around the site will be collected and built into the landscaping proposals.

LDF Policy 25 – Developer Contributions

6.83 The Policy states that:

“The Council will work with partners and developers to secure, where appropriate, the provision of additional, extended or improved, physical, social and green infrastructure that will be needed to support the delivery of the LDF. Developers will be required to provide or contribute through a commuted sum to the cost of appropriate infrastructure that results from the development and/or to mitigate the effects of the proposal.

Infrastructure contributions will be sought unless it can be demonstrated by the developer that it is not financially viable and would prejudice the proposed development or, there are wider community and regeneration benefits for not seeking a contribution”.

6.84 Developer contributions normally relate to affordable housing and public open space provision.

6.85 It is likely that there will be substantial costs in providing the vehicular access, drainage and other infrastructure to support a relatively low number of houses within the scheme. In addition, the high costs of the work needed to the existing trees, the additional trees to be planted, the enhanced landscaping of the site, including the water features and other green infrastructure will be high.

6.86 It is expected that these issues will be discussed with the Council as the application is considered. A viability assessment may be required to inform the discussions.

Housing Policy

6.87 The Oldham Housing Strategy indicates that a range of house types should be available in locations throughout the borough to suit the needs of existing residents and those wishing to live within the borough.

6.88 Taking into account the above, the proposed dwellings will add to the range of houses available in the borough and help to meet Oldham’s housing requirements. The site is in a sustainable location which will help to reduce reliance on the use of private cars.

6.89 It is intended to provide custom built houses as part of the scheme. This will allow residents to be involved in the design their own houses. There is a great demand for this type of building plot and a distinct shortfall of available sites in Saddleworth and Oldham.

6.90 The housing situation in Oldham has changed considerably over the last few years.

6.91 The Government has constantly restated its commitment to providing over 300,000 new dwellings per annum nationally.

6.92 Revised Government Guidelines and the draft PFE indicates that Oldham’s housing targets in the LDF are too low and a substantial increase in annual housing numbers is required.

6.93 In view of the above, it has been accepted by the Council that it does not have a 5 year supply of available housing sites and consequently in this respect the Local Plan is out of date, as it is not in compliance with the NPPF.

6.94 The principle of development on OPOL within Oldham has recently been confirmed in the of granting planning permission for development at Knowles Lane, Springhead (reference PA/343269/19), Hebron Street, Royton (reference PA/343341/19) and Cowlshaw, Royton,

6.95 In all three cases the Council balanced the need for housing against the OPOL designation and, using the tilted balance principle, found in favour of the proposed development.

6.96 The land it is proposed to develop at the Summershades Caravan Park is all within the OPOL designation and does not involve Green Belt land. Only part of the OPOL land is proposed for development.

6.97 The Oldham Housing Strategy, and the PFE, have identified Saddleworth as an area where high value detached houses are needed.

6.98 Unlike the 3 sites referred to above the Summershades OPOL will retain its woodland character which will be enhanced and be managed into the future.

7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The site is unmanaged woodland and scrub land. 60% of the trees are non-native including extensive Rhododendron and Himalayan Balsam areas. Public footpaths run across the site as well as open and underground water courses.

7.2 Due to the size of the site, the range of issues it presents and the lack of funds available the Summershades trustees are unable to maintain the site effectively, let alone carry out the improvements and enhancement referred to above.

7.3 The proposed limited development, 12 houses, will provide the enabling funds needed to address the tree and drainage issues and implement a full attractive landscape scheme that will be of benefit to both the new residents and the public.

7.4 In addition, the proposals include the planting of a substantial number of trees within the site which will enhance the woodland character of the area. This, and the additional landscaping will create an environment that will encourage wildlife and increase biodiversity.

7.5 The OPOL designation in the Oldham Development Plan has resulted from the wooded nature of the site. This will be retained and enhanced with the existing development set amongst the trees.

7.6 The proposals will allow the necessary works to take place to the trees and drainage and will ensure that these and the substantial additional planting and water features are maintained into the future.

7.7 Oldham has a short fall of available housing land at present and the PFE define Saddleworth as an appropriate area for executive/high value housing to balance the large number of high-density terraced housing elsewhere in the borough.

7.8 In view of the above, and using the tilted balance principle, it is considered that the proposed housing development on the Summershades Caravan Park site should be given much greater weight as it not only assists in meeting Oldham's housing targets but also enables the enhancement and future maintenance of the overall land area within the OPOL designation. Without the income for the development this will not happen.

7.9 The development is an example of good town planning integrating limited development within an existing landscape that will be enhanced in accordance with a management plan to be agreed with the Council, including public access.

7.10 The proposals will be good for the image of Oldham, in line with its PFE aspirations and will provide attractive family accommodation in an existing residential area.

7.11 Further information can be provided as required during consideration of the application.

Chorlton Planning
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