

PLANNING REPORT



Proposed BIOHAUS® Factory at
Ashingdon Road / Greensward Lane, Ashingdon

On behalf of HEMSPAN Ltd

April 2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Report has been prepared by Ceres Property on behalf of HEMSPAN Ltd to consider the planning merits of the development of a BIOHAUS® Factory ('the Proposed Development') at the junction of Ashingdon Road and Greensward Lane, Ashingdon ('the Site').

1.2 HEMSPAN Ltd is looking to bring forward a strategic-scale, climate-positive, mixed-use development ('Rochford Park') at East Rochford comprising:

- c.2,000 climate-positive homes (including 50% affordable housing)
- SEND school, forest school, nursery
- Tourism development
- Neighbourhood hub, complementing Rochford town centre and utilising historic buildings to ensure viable use, including leisure, as well as space for arts/entertainment
- Employment uses
- Green infrastructure
- New highway infrastructure, plus pedestrian and cycle routes
- Habitat enhancement and creation.

1.3 The above development would be delivered using bio-based building technologies, utilising hemp, and circular systems to enable mass adoption of climate-positive living. It would help address Rochford District's acute housing shortage, and in a manner that delivers additional and substantial environmental, social, and economic benefit for the area.

1.4 Key elements of the proposed construction approach include the following:

- **Materials:** primarily hemp and structural timber as the main building materials. The woody core of hemp stems is transformed into boards, while the outer fibre is used for insulation.
- **Panelised System:** The construction employs a prefabricated, whole-house panelised system. These panels are manufactured off-site and then shipped to the construction site for assembly.
- **Carbon Sequestration:** The use of hemp and timber allows the buildings to sequester significant amounts of carbon. Each home can lock up at least 50 tonnes of carbon through its hemp components alone.

- **Energy Efficiency:** BIOHAUS® homes are designed to be highly energy-efficient, often meeting or exceeding Passivhaus standards. They incorporate features such as superior insulation, triple-glazed windows, and advanced ventilation systems.
- **Circular Design:** The system emphasises circularity, with materials being recyclable throughout their lifespan and leftover materials from production being reused in the manufacturing process.
- **Advanced Technologies:** BIOHAUS® incorporates various technologies to enhance sustainability, including solar panels, ground-source and air-source heat pumps, and wastewater heat recovery systems.
- **Fire Performance:** The system has achieved a comprehensive 2-hour fire performance rating.
- **Thermal Efficiency:** BIOHAUS® panels have exceptional thermal properties, with a U-value of 0.100W/m²K.
- **BOPAS Accreditation:** The BIOHAUS® system has received accreditation from the Build Offsite Property Assurance Scheme (BOPAS), ensuring its eligibility for mortgages, warranties, and insurance.

1.5 The vision is to construct the new BIOHAUS® factory that will be used to deliver Rochford Park within

Rochford District. Not only will this minimise distances for transporting material and products, with resultant environmental benefits, but it will also result in the substantial social and economic benefits that will accompany the construction of the new factory being captured by Rochford District for the benefit of its local community.

1.6 The new factory is projected to directly generate 350 new jobs, and indirectly contribute towards 175 new jobs. It is estimated it would generate c.£700m GDP. In addition, the growing of hemp locally to supply the factory is projected to add £7m to the local farming community each year.

1.7 Furthermore, as part of the commitment to maximising the social benefits of the development, the aspiration is for the new factory to provide employment opportunities and the opportunity to gain skills for young people, particularly those looking for work.

1.8 A potential location for the Proposed Development has been identified ('the Site'), and is now in HEMSPAN's control. The Site's location is shown overleaf, as Figure 1.

1.9 This Report explores the planning merits of the Site for the proposed development, including in relation to available, suitable alternative sites.



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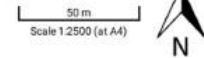


Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

2. THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AND ITS LOCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- 2.1 The proposed development is a Category 2 Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) Factory¹ designed to have the capacity to deliver the proposed development of Rochford Park.
- 2.2 Category 2 MMC factories manufacture flat panel units, such as walls, floors, and roofs, which are transported to site in a flat-packed format and assembled to create the building's superstructure.
- 2.3 There are a number of advantages to this process over alternative methods.
- 2.4 Panels are easier to transport, especially to sites with access or storage constraints, as they are not bulky like volumetric modules.
- 2.5 The process is suitable for a range of building types and can be tailored to different architectural designs and site conditions.
- 2.6 Furthermore, the approach allows for better quality assurance and faster on-site assembly, reducing construction time and site disruption. The process is carried out in controlled factory conditions, ensuring higher quality and consistency compared to traditional site-based construction.
- 2.7 In terms of the specific proposal for the Site, in addition to the area required for manufacturing, it incorporates ancillary office space for the operation of the facility.
- 2.8 The proposed development incorporates a solar-powered PV-roofed building and a biomass plant that supports the solar power generated from the roof area.
- 2.9 It includes a yard area, limited car parking, and incorporates a one-way circular route for HGV deliveries and loading.
- 2.10 The single-level factory floor totals c.45,000 sq.m. Accounting for drainage, yard area, circular route for HGVs, car parking requires, and landscaping, the total land required to accommodate the proposed development is c.6.5 ha.
- 2.11 A site plan (Appendix 1), elevations (Appendix 2), and sections (Appendix 3) have been prepared in respect of

¹ Modern Methods of Construction – Introducing the MMC Definition Framework (2019) [available at http://www.cast-consultancy.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/MMC-I-Pad-base_GOVUK-FINAL_SECURE.pdf]

the proposed development; along with CGI views (Appendix 4).

- 2.12 A new vehicular access is proposed via Ashingdon Road, on the Site's northern boundary. A detailed access drawing is provided as Appendix 5.
- 2.13 In terms of its operation, approximately 100 lorry movements into / out of the Site are anticipated per day (which can be managed to avoid peak hours and ensure movements are dispersed throughout the day to avoid congestion), bringing the raw products to be used in the manufacturing process.
- 2.14 Consequently, accessibility to the strategic highway network is important.
- 2.15 Whilst there is a need to ensure accessibility via road for raw materials, it is envisaged that employees will be able to access the new factory via alternatives to the car. There is of course a social and economic benefit to ensuring that any employment generating use is accessible to alternatives to the private car.
- 2.16 Furthermore, it is relevant to note that there is proposed to be a particular focus on the new factory providing employment and training opportunities for young people, including school leavers, in the area. It is particularly important that development aimed at

providing employment and training opportunities for young people is accessible by alternatives to the private car, as many young people do not own or have regular access to a car due to financial constraints or age. Ensuring good access via public transport, walking, and cycling promotes equal opportunities, reduces social exclusion, and supports young peoples' ability to participate in education, training, and employment. Additionally, it encourages more sustainable travel behaviour and helps reduce traffic congestion and environmental impact.

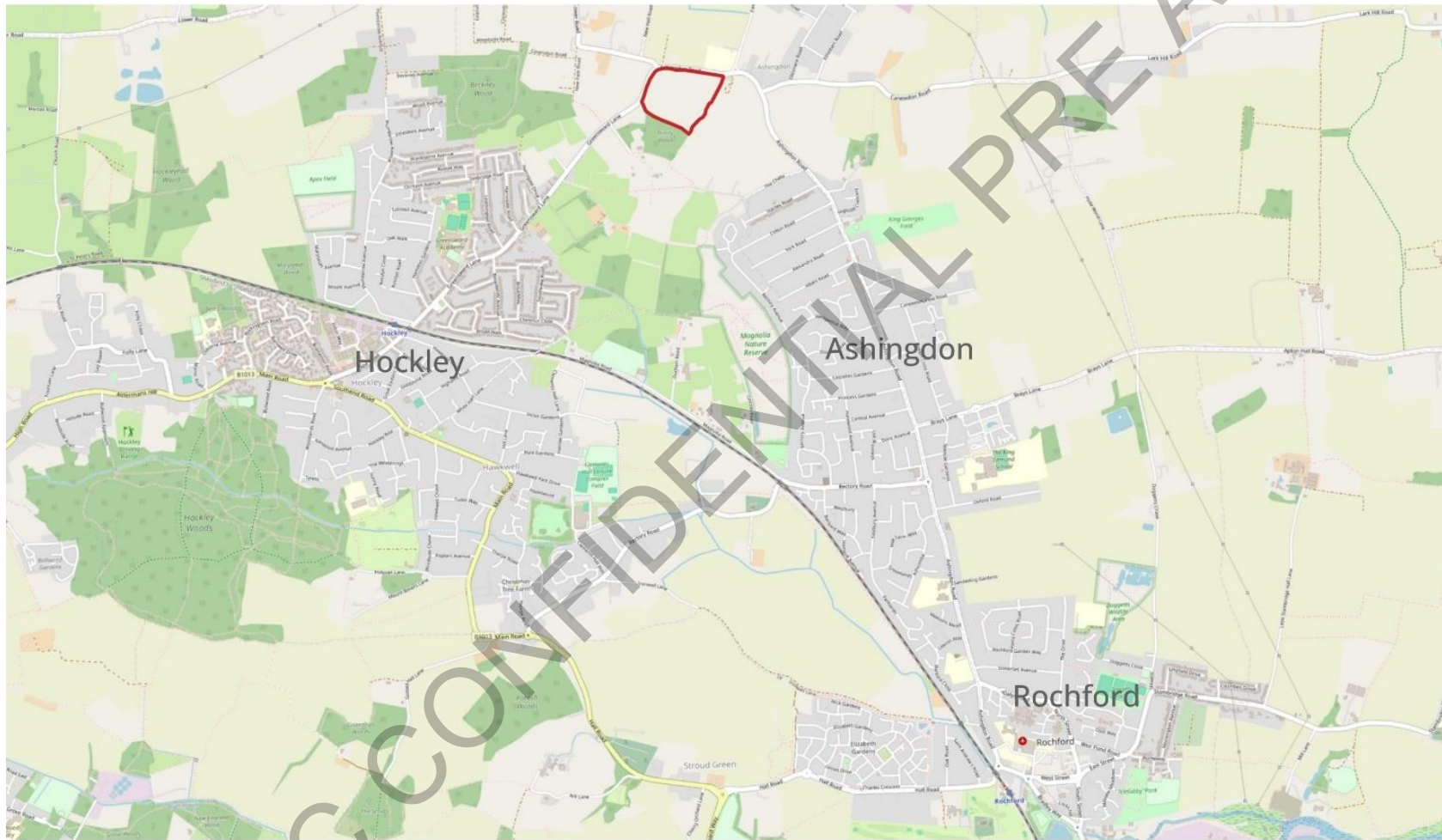
- 2.17 Whilst the new factory is not exclusively intended to provide homes for the new development at Rochford Park (and indeed, one of the benefits it will provide is to enable the construction of more environmentally sustainable homes across the District and within South Essex) the proximity and accessibility to Rochford Park is nevertheless relevant, given the intended relationship between the two sites, and the environmental benefits of minimising the construction mileage used to implement Rochford Park.
- 2.18 It is also envisaged that materials used in the construction process will also be brought in via Baltic Wharf, located on Wallasea Island, and thus accessibility to this is a further relevant consideration.

2.19 Finally, it is important that land identified for the new factory is not only suitable for the development, but is available and achievable in order to ensure it can be delivered.

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3. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 3.1 The Site is located to the immediate south-east of where Ashingdon Road, Greensward Lane, and Lower Road all meet. It is situated to the north-west of Ashingdon, north-east of Hockley, and to the south-west of the Ashingdon Plotlands. The location of the Site in its wider context, in relation to Ashingdon and Hockley in particular, is shown in Figure 2 overleaf.
- 3.2 The Site is greenfield, currently in agricultural use as arable land, and measures c.8.75ha.
- 3.3 It is largely featureless, with the exception of landscaping on its eastern, western and northern boundaries.
- 3.4 Another aspect of the Site is its topography – the land rises relatively steeply towards the southern boundary of the Site and the wooded area beyond.
- 3.5 To the south of the Site is a dense wooded area – Trinity Wood, a 3.3ha Local Wildlife Site.
- 3.6 Whilst the Site is beyond defined settlement boundaries, there is still existing development and other urbanising influences within close proximity to it.
- 3.7 On the opposite side of the Ashingdon Road to the Site, from west to east, are: Woodview dog kennels; Ashingdon Primary Academy, and Life House Community Church.
- 3.8 The church forms the western end of lineal development running west-east, on the northern side of Ashingdon Road and then Canewdon Road, before then forming the larger Ashingdon Plotlands residential area. Further eastwards are large-scale solar farms / solar farms currently being implemented.
- 3.9 The south-western corner of the Site is c.120m from the beginning of a lineal form of residential development that runs the length of Greensward Lane before reaching the town of Hockley.
- 3.10 Bus stops are located adjacent to the northern boundary of the Site, either side of Ashingdon Road.



Produced on Land App, Mar 24, 2025.
© OpenStreetMap contributors



500 m
Scale 1:27214 (at A4)



Figure 2 – Site and wider context

4. PLANNING POLICY

4.19 The elements of Rochford District's Development Plan considered most relevant to this Planning Report include the following:

- the Rochford Core Strategy (adopted December 2011) ('the RCS')
- the Allocations Plan (adopted February 2014) ('the AP')
- the Hockley Area Action Plan (adopted February 2014) ('the HAAP').
- the London Southend Airport and Environs Joint Area Action Plan (adopted December 2014) ('the JAAP')
- the Development Management Plan (adopted December 2014) ('the DMP')

Rochford Core Strategy

4.20 The RCS establishes the overarching spatial vision and strategic objectives for the District. It emphasises the importance of safeguarding existing employment land and identifies the need for additional employment allocations, particularly in the western part of the District, including areas west of Rayleigh for potential office development. It seeks to address employment needs to 2021, aiming to deliver an additional net 3,000 local jobs by this point. The RCS states that London Southend

Airport will be a focus for the creation of new jobs for the residents of both Rochford District and neighbouring Southend Borough, with a Joint Area Action Plan to be prepared to address this cross-boundary opportunity.

4.21 In addition to providing strategic policies to guide new employment allocations, the RCS also provides strategic policy framework for several existing employment areas to be redeveloped for alternative, primarily residential, uses. These include Eldon Way (Hockley); Rawreth Industrial Estate (Rayleigh); and Star Lane (Great Wakering).

Allocations Plan

4.22 The Site is allocated as Green Belt in the AP, but not subject to any other designations.

4.23 The AP designates both existing and new sites for employment use, seeking to accommodate employment development needs the District.

4.24 This includes the protection of established employment areas and the identification of new sites on previously designated Green Belt land to accommodate future employment needs.

- 4.25 The AP seeks to realise the RCS's ambitions to facilitate employment development which provides a net 3,000 additional jobs by 2021.
- 4.26 It includes allocation of the area within Rochford District to be addressed by the JAAP.
- 4.27 Separately to the JAAP area, the AP also allocates land for employment uses at West of the A1245, Rayleigh (NEL1) and at South of Great Wakering (NEL2) (as a replacement for the existing Star Lane site to be redeveloped for housing).
- 4.28 These two employment allocations, NEL1 and NEL2, are located in the south-west and south-east corners, respectively, of the District.
- 4.29 NEL1 (now known as Arterial Park) has a strong relationship with the strategic highway network, located just off the Fairglen Interchange, which provides direct connections to the A127 and A130. Modern warehouses and logistics have been developed on this allocation.
- 4.30 As noted above, NEL2 is a replacement allocation for land the Development Plan proposes at Star Lane be redeveloped for residential use.
- 4.31 Figure 3 and Figure 4, shown overleaf, created using the Council's online, interactive Allocations Plan, show the location of existing and proposed employment

allocations made by the AP in the west and east of the District, respectively; as well as areas the AP suggests existing employment areas will be allowed, in at least part, to be redeveloped for residential use.

- 4.32 The AP also confirms existing employment areas that will be protected for employment use. These include:

- Purdeys Industrial Estate, to the south-east of Rochford
- Swaines Industrial Estate, Rochford
- Rochford Business Park, to the south-west of Rochford
- Imperial Park Industrial Estate, north-west Rayleigh
- Brook Road Industrial Estate, south Rayleigh
- Baltic Wharf and Essex Marina, Wallasea Island

- 4.33 In respect of Baltic Wharf and Essex Marina, it should be noted that had a dual allocation of employment and Green Belt. As such, whilst existing employment uses are afforded protection, opportunity for significant, policy-compliant intensification or expansion of employment uses here appears to be constrained.



Figure 3 – AP Policies Map extract (west) with existing and proposed employment land allocations indicated

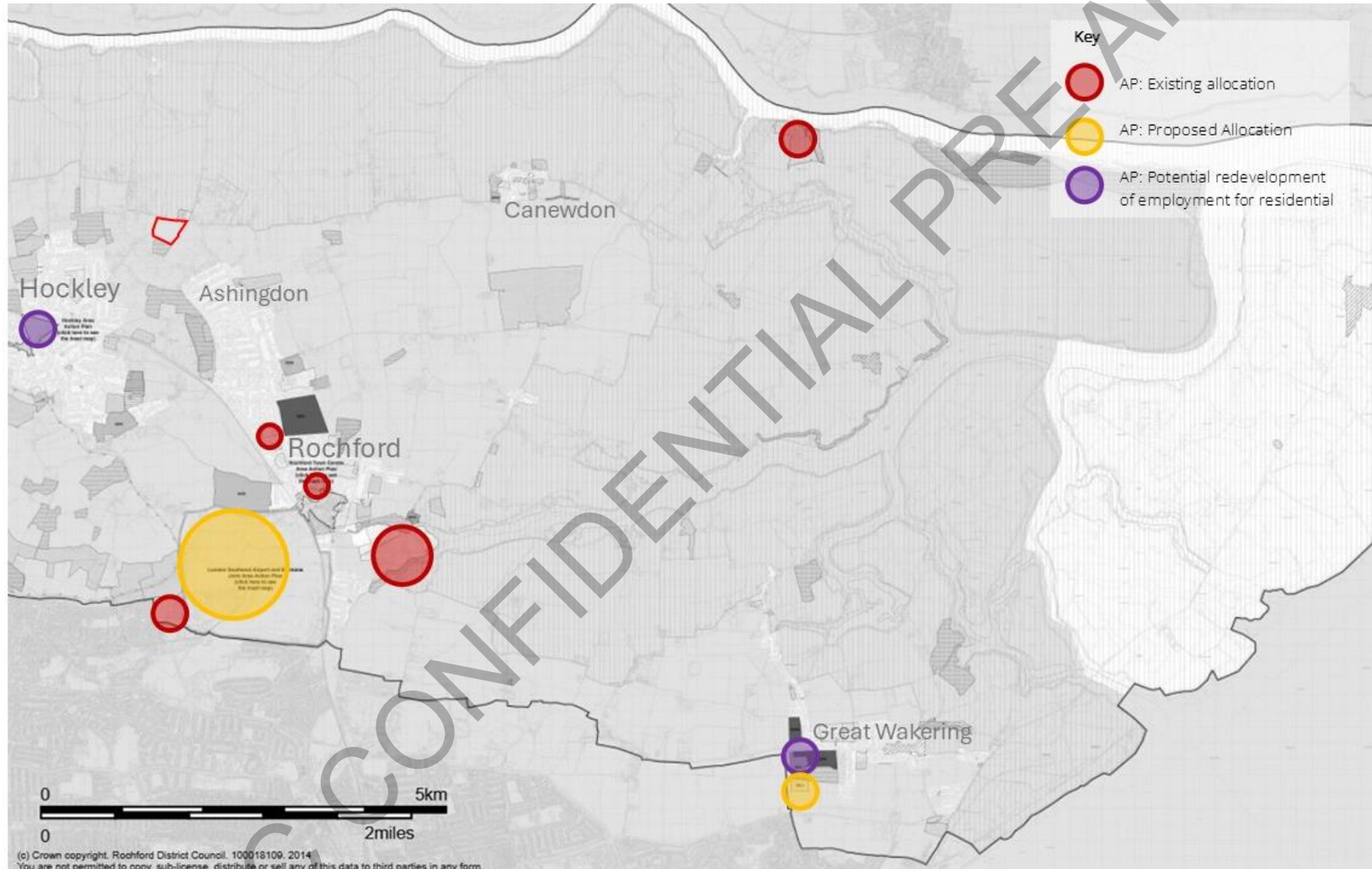


Figure 4 – AP Policies Map extract (east) with existing and proposed employment land allocations indicated

Hockley Area Action Plan

- 4.34 The HAAP concerns Hockley Town Centre only, but is relevant in this case as it allocates part of the Eldon Way Industrial Estate as the Eldon Way Opportunity Site.
- 4.35 The Eldon Way Opportunity Site supports redevelopment of employment uses for a mix of residential development (no more than 50% of the allocated site) as well as employment and leisure uses.

London Southend Airport and Environs JAAP

- 4.36 The JAAP anticipates the creation of approximately 6,200 additional jobs (excluding direct airport-related employment) over the planning period to 2021 and beyond. Additionally, it is projected that 1,180 jobs will be created within the airport boundary by 2021.
- 4.37 The employment growth is expected to be evenly distributed between Rochford and Southend, with each district accounting for approximately 50% of the new jobs generated within the JAAP area.
- 4.38 This strategic development is designed to bolster the local economy, enhance the area's attractiveness to investors, and provide significant employment opportunities for residents of both Rochford and Southend.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.39 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is an important material consideration
- 4.40 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 4.41 The proposed development of a factory dedicated to manufacturing high-environmental-standard homes, situated within the Green Belt, engages several pertinent policies within the 2024 NPPF. Key considerations include Green Belt protection (NPPF chapter 13), economic development (chapter 6), and climate change mitigation (chapter 14).
- 4.42 The NPPF reaffirms the importance of Green Belt land in preventing urban sprawl, safeguarding the countryside, and preserving the setting of historic towns. Development within the Green Belt is generally considered inappropriate unless specific conditions are met.
- 4.43 The NPPF confirms (at paragraph 137) that the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and permanence.
- 4.44 As set out at paragraph 138 of the NPPF, the Green Belt serves five purposes:

a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas

b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another

c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment

d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns, and

e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

4.45 NPPF paragraph 155 outlines circumstances where development in the Green Belt may not be deemed inappropriate. These include:

- The development utilises grey belt land and does not fundamentally undermine the purposes of the remaining Green Belt across the plan area
- There is a demonstrable unmet need for the proposed development
- The development is in a sustainable location, with reference to paragraphs 110 and 115 of the NPPF, and
- Where applicable (major development involving provision of housing in the Green Belt / on land being removed from the Green Belt), the

development meets the 'Golden Rules' set out in paragraphs 156–157 of the NPPF.

4.46 The NPPF defines grey belt as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that does not strongly contribute to any of the purposes (a), (b), or (d) of the NPPF as set out in paragraph 143 of the NPPF.

4.47 It explains that grey belt excludes land where the application of policies relating to areas or assets in footnote 7 (other than Green Belt) would provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development.

4.48 Where development is defined as inappropriate in the Green Belt, it does not automatically follow that it should be refused. Rather, the NPPF requires that very special circumstances be demonstrated that justify its consent. The NPPF explains very special circumstances apply where the harm to the Green Belt is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

4.49 Separately, the NPPF supports the creation of conditions conducive to business investment, expansion, and adaptation. Planning policies should recognise the specific locational requirements of some businesses, including those involved in high-tech and sustainable manufacturing sectors.

4.50 The NPPF emphasises the role of the planning system in supporting the transition to a low carbon future. It encourages developments that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable and low carbon technologies.

RDC CONFIDENTIAL PRE APP

5. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The Site is located within the Green Belt – a policy constraint to development.
- 5.2 The existing Development Plan and the NPPF both place great importance on protecting the function of the Green Belt.
- 5.3 The NPPF does not seek to place an absolute restriction on development within the Green Belt. It also identifies forms of development that are not inappropriate.
- 5.4 This includes, subject to other criteria being met, where the land in question meets the definition of grey belt.
- 5.5 In addition, even where development is, by definition, inappropriate development in the Green Belt, the NPPF confirms that very special circumstances justifying its approval will exist where the benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh harm to the Green Belt as well as any other harms.
- 5.6 The PPG goes on to confirm that in considering a site's contribution to purposes a), b) and d) of the Green Belt, these purposes only apply to towns and expressly states they do not apply to villages.
- 5.7 Whilst Hockley is a town, Ashingdon is a village. However, its status is somewhat complicated by the fact that the RCS considers Ashingdon and Rochford together as, functionally, a single settlement and treats it as a town.
- 5.8 Regardless of whether Ashingdon is a town or a village, it is considered that it would be difficult to feasibly argue that the harm to any of the relevant Green Belt purposes would be anything more than moderate.
- 5.9 Consequently, the Site could be considered grey belt.
- 5.10 In terms of whether it could be considered a sustainable site in the context of NPPF paragraphs 110 and 115 (i.e. in terms of accessibility, in particular by alternatives to the private car) this is considered in detail later within this section. But in short, it is clearly a sustainable location in this regard.
- 5.11 If the Site was not found to constitute grey belt, it would be necessary to consider whether any harm (including harm to the Green Belt) is outweighed by other considerations.
- 5.12 In this regard, in terms of harm to the purposes of the Green Belt, it is notable that the Site is subject to a significant degree of self-containment, and there is existing development within the locality to the north,

east and west which influence how the Site is perceived.

- 5.13 Ignoring for one moment that Ashingdon is a village, in terms of potential coalescence, the gap between Hockley and Ashingdon would remain, with the undeveloped land to the south of the Site clearly providing a more important role in this regard.
- 5.14 In terms of the benefits of the proposed development, these are considered very significant and should be afforded very substantial weight in the planning balance.
- 5.15 The social and economic benefits from the additional 350 jobs generated directly by the development would be significant.
- 5.16 In addition, the proposed development is also projected to indirectly support a further 175 additional jobs is a further social and economic benefit to the area.
- 5.17 Whilst Rochford District as a whole is relatively affluent, there are pockets of deprivation, which are focussed around the town of Rochford itself. The proposed development's provision of employment and training opportunities is a further social benefit which attracts additional weight in this context.
- 5.18 The provision of the factory producing dwellings of this nature would have significant environmental benefits for the sub-region as a whole. By directing the factory to the

Site, the HGV mileage for transportation of material from Baltic Wharf and for the transportation of products to Rochford Park would be limited, representing a further environmental benefit of utilising this Site specifically.

- 5.19 As discussed in more detail below, the Site is also very accessible from the District main population centres by alternatives to the private car, representing a further environmental as well as social benefit.
- 5.20 In overview, even if one to consider it necessary to demonstrate very special circumstances to justify the proposed development of the Site, it is considered the benefits would clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. Other potential harms – as well as other potential benefits – are explored further below.

Landscape and visual impacts

- 5.21 The RCS identifies two particular landscape areas which can be seen as valued landscapes as per NPPF paragraph 187 (i.e. landscapes particularly merit protection from development that may harm their value). These are the Upper Roach Valley (Policy URV1) and Coastal Protection Belt (Policy ENV2).
- 5.22 The AP confirms the extent of the Upper Roach Valley and Coastal Protection Belt. The Site does not sit within either designation.

- 5.23 It is not, of course, the case that any development outside of these areas will be incapable of causing undue harm to landscape considerations, or that such land cannot be of any landscape value.
- 5.24 In respect of the Site, it is recognised that it is greenfield and that any development will have an intrinsic impact on landscape even if only contained within the Site itself.
- 5.25 The new factory on the Site would be visible from Ashingdon Road beyond the site boundary.
- 5.26 The proposed development utilises an innovative design together with the Site's topography to reduce visual and landscape impacts.
- 5.27 It is notable that the Site rises from north to south, towards the wooded area, and this reduces the visual impact of the Site from the north in particular. Furthermore, when viewed from the south, the proposed development would not protrude above the height of the trees to the rear of the development.
- 5.28 The visual impact would not only be reduced by its setting within the slope towards the wooded higher ground to the rear, but is further mitigated by the proposed exposed timber gridshell canopy.
- 5.29 This high-quality, innovative design is covered with a sloping living roof to undulate across the frontage over

the offices and to wrap around both the prominent corners, then merging into the rising slope of the site as it absorbs the undercroft in the landscape setting.

- 5.30 The landscaping proposals, including tree and hedge planting as well as blue infrastructure, will further help ensure the proposed development has a natural landscape setting.
- 5.31 There would nevertheless be a degree of visual and landscape harm from the development. Proposals do incorporate mitigation measures that will reduce the harm.
- 5.32 Following initial pre-application feedback from Rochford District Council regarding the principle of the proposed development of the Site, it is intended that a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be undertaken to further inform proposals and identify potential additional mitigation required.
- 5.33 Notwithstanding mitigation, it is accepted that, as with any development of a greenfield site there will be some landscape and visual harm.
- 5.34 This harm would need to be weighed in the planning balance, alongside any other harm, and in relation to the benefits of the Site's proposed development.

Accessibility to employees

- 5.35 The Site is extremely well-placed in terms of its accessibility to alternatives to the private car in respect of its relationship to existing bus services.
- 5.36 There are existing bus stops immediately opposite the Site, located to the east of the Lower Road, Greensward Lane, and Ashingdon Road (reference Lower Road, Stop ID esxagatg and esxagatj).
- 5.37 The no.7 bus service drops-off / picks-up from these stops. This service runs through and connects the principal settlements of the District, including Rayleigh, Hockley and Rochford. It also provides access to and from the District's railway stations, including those in the aforementioned towns, plus London Southend Airport railway station.
- 5.38 Figure 5 overleaf shows the travel times via public transport to / from the Site from Rochford, Hockley, and Rayleigh centres, and London Southend Airport.

Transportation of materials / products

- 5.39 Material and the products produced at the Site will require transportation via HGV.
- 5.40 In addition to materials anticipated to come in from the west and south as one would typically expect from manufacturing process located in this area; materials are

also anticipated to be transported in via Baltic Wharf to the east of the Site, located on Wallasea Island.

- 5.41 A map showing Essex County Council's Priority Route 1 (PR1) and Priority Route 2 (PR2) within Rochford District is provided as Figure 6.
- 5.42 PR1 roads are the county's key routes, facilitating high-speed traffic flow across Essex.
- 5.43 These roads are crucial for connecting major towns and linking to national roads like the A12. Due to their importance, PR1 roads are maintained to the highest standards to ensure safety and efficiency.
- 5.44 PR2 roads serve as local main roads, typically found within towns or connecting nearby villages. While they carry less traffic than PR1 roads, PR2 roads are still significant for local connectivity and are prioritised for maintenance accordingly.
- 5.45 As Figure 6 shows, the Site is located such that it can reach the wider strategic highway network (including the A12 and A130) using PR1 / PR2 roads only.
- 5.46 The Site also has near-direct access to the Rochford Park site via PR1 roads; and is connected to Baltic Wharf by a combination of PR1 and PR2 roads.

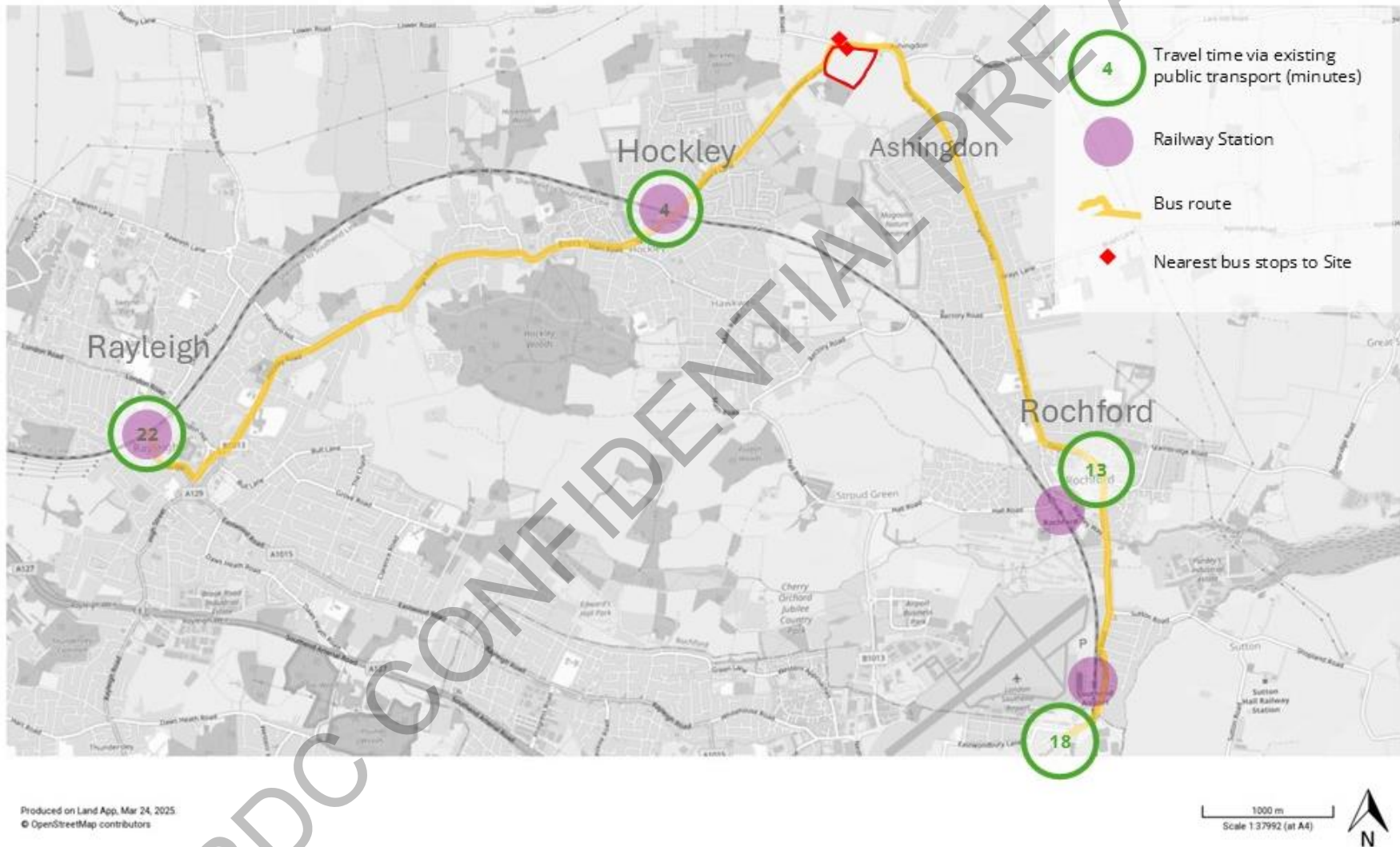


Figure 5 – Travel times from town centres and London Southend Airport to the Site by public transport

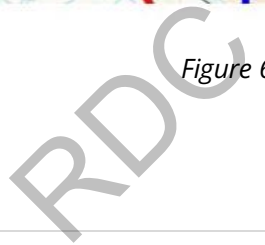


Figure 6

Flood Risk

- 5.47 The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 – land least at risk of flooding from tidal or fluvial sources.
- 5.48 Additionally, the Site lack any significant areas of surface water flooding that might pose a constraint to development.

Ecology

- 5.49 The Site is not subject to any Development Plan or statutory designations to suggest that it is of any particular ecological significance.
- 5.50 As agricultural land in arable use, the Site is likely of very low ecological value, with the exception of landscaping along its boundaries.
- 5.51 Development of the Site affords opportunity to provide ecological enhancements, and delivery biodiversity net gain.
- 5.52 Additionally, land to the north of the Site is also within the same ownership, and is available to be used for biodiversity net gain as part of development of the Site if required.

Heritage

- 5.53 The Site neither contains any designated heritage assets nor is in close proximity to any.

- 5.54 The nearest Listed Buildings include Ashingdon Hall (Grade II); Church of St Andrew (Grade II*). Both of these heritage assets lie more than 700m to the south-east of the Site, and modern existing development lies between them and the Site.

Trees

- 5.55 The Council's Tree Preservation Order (TPO) online map confirms there are no TPO trees within or along the Site's boundaries.
- 5.56 There are no trees within the Site itself.
- 5.57 The creation of a new access to the Site may necessitate removal of some landscaping along the Site's northern boundary. However, the development would be accompanied by a landscaping scheme that would result in an overall gain across the Site.

Energy

- 5.58 In addition to features incorporated into the proposed development itself to maximise the use of sustainable forms of energy in the operation of the factory (e.g. the proposed PV roof), the Site is located in sufficient proximity to solar farms to the east such that it can achieve a direct line connection, ensuring the factory can be powered by solar power. This is a locationally-specific benefit, which is unachievable in much of the District.

Constraints overview

- 5.59 A map showing consolidated constraints in the wider area in which the Site is located is shown overleaf as Figure 7.
- 5.60 This illustrates the lack of constraints to development of the Site, in overview.

Residential amenity

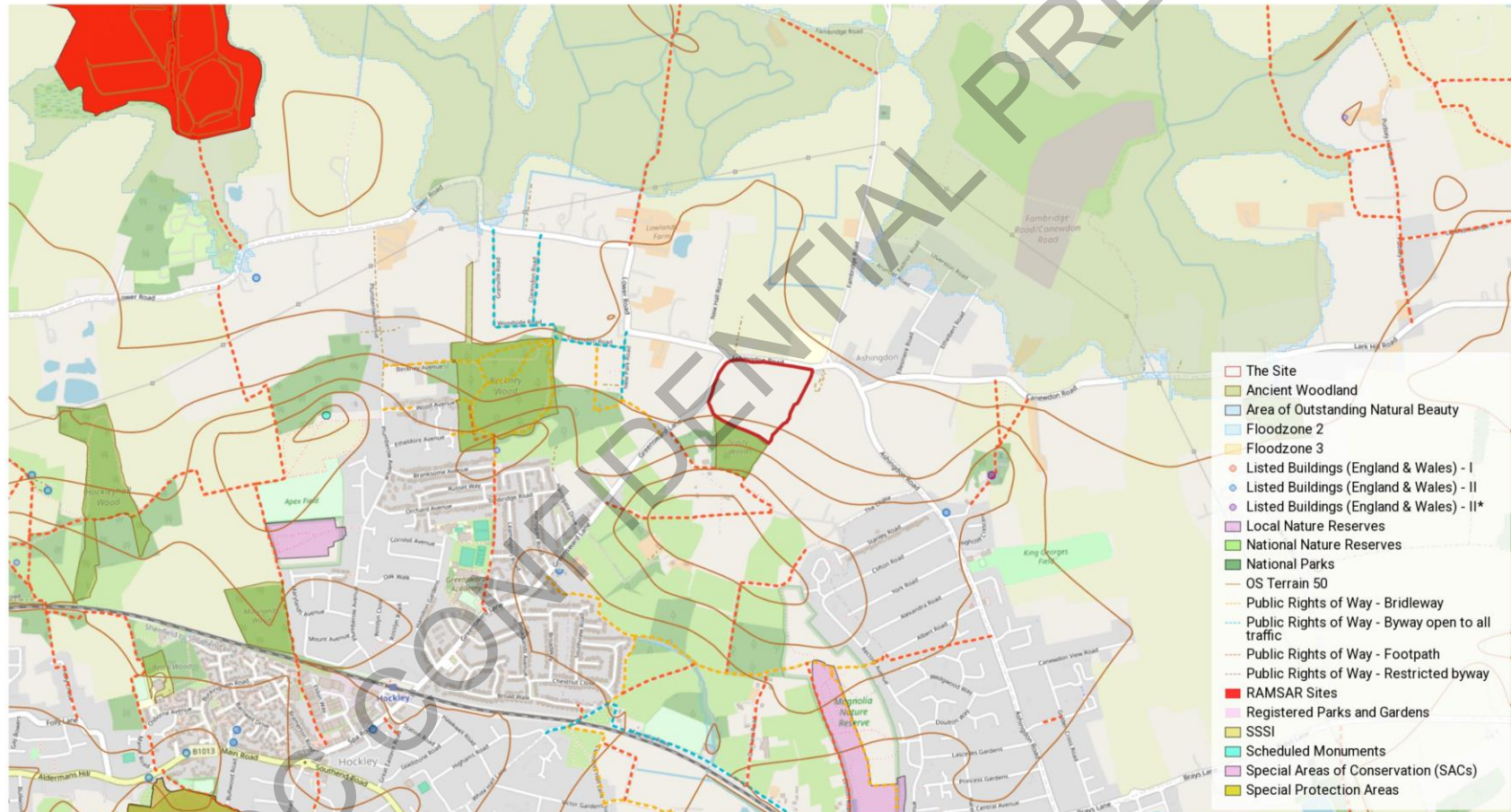
- 5.61 There is one dwelling adjoining the Site, located to the east (The Paddocks). To the rear of this dwelling are several barns, and there appears to be an existing level of activity on the Site.
- 5.62 There is another dwelling located along Greensward Lane, c.120m to the west south-west of the Site's south-western corner.
- 5.63 To the east are the northern edge of Ashingdon, and the Ashingdon Plotlands. Both of which are c.200m from the Site.
- 5.64 Given the nature of the manufacturing process, it will not result in any harm to local residential amenity in terms of emissions, impact on air quality, etc. Furthermore, any noise generated is likely to be largely contained within the Site itself.

- 5.65 The greatest potential impact on residential amenity is considered to be that generated by vehicular movements to and from the Site. In that respect, it is pertinent to consider the existing impact, having regard to the existing level of traffic along Ashingdon Road, Greensward Lane, and Lower Road in the vicinity of the Site.

- 5.66 In this respect, whilst the proposed development will generate additional vehicular movements, the increase relative to existing activity is considered to be relatively limited and not to be of such a scale as to result in undue harm to neighbouring amenity.

Ashingdon Primary Academy

- 5.67 Ashingdon Primary Academy is located to the north-east of the Site, on the opposite side of Ashingdon Road. It is another potential sensitive receptor to future users of the Site. Again, and for the same reasons as the proposed development would not cause undue harm to residential amenity, given the nature of this modern manufacturing facility, it would not result in any undue impact on students at Ashingdon Primary Academy, or to the effective operation of the School.



Produced on Land App, Mar 24, 2025
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Figure 7 – Constraints overview

Availability

- 5.68 The Site is in single ownership and within the control of the same landowner as the proposed site for Rochford Park.
- 5.69 There are no legal or ownership constraints to the development of the Site as proposed, and the landowner is willing to bring the Site forward for the proposed use.

Achievability

- 5.70 The Site is subject to a lack of constraints likely to engender abnormal costs to its development and is also available for the development proposed.
- 5.71 Consequently, the Site is considered achievable.

6. REASONABLE AND AVAILABLE ALTERNATIVES

- 6.1 From a purely quantitative perspective, the proposed development's land requirements are not insignificant.
- 6.2 In order to develop a manufacturing facility that would be viable as well as capable of producing the quantum of development proposed for Rochford Park, it is understood that a factory / office area of at least c.40,000 sqm is required.
- 6.3 In addition, a yard area including for HGVs is required to service the manufacturing facility.
- 6.4 The total land-take in for the proposed development is at least c.6.5ha.
- 6.5 Looking at the existing employment areas in the District, the Council's Employment Land Study (2024) ('the ELS') considered all existing employment land (allocated and informal) in the District, and found only seven were, in total, larger than 6.5ha. These, and their areas, are listed in the table below.

Site	Total area (ha)
Aviation Way Industrial Estate, Aviation Way, Southend	14.74
Baltic Wharf, Creeksea Ferry Road, Wallasea Island	16.17

Site	Total area (ha)
Brook Road Industrial Estate, Brook Road, Rayleigh	13.2
Rochford Business Park, Cherry Orchard Way, Southend	11.67
Purdeys Industrial Estate, Sutton Road, Rochford	41.03
Arterial Park (formerly Michelins Farm), Chelmsford Road, Rayleigh	8.81
JAAP Sites 2 & 3 (Airport Business Park)	20.98

- 6.6 The ELS also recorded the percentage of each employment site that were vacant / undeveloped. Once this is accounted for, it suggests only one site in the District within an existing employment area / allocation that has the potential, in purely quantitative terms, to accommodate the proposed development: JAAP Sites 2 & 3 (Airport Business Park). The ELS reported that 60% of this site, allocated through the JAAP, was vacant / derelict, which equates to c.12.6ha.
- 6.7 An extract from the ELS showing JAAP Sites 2 & 3 is shown overleaf as Figure 8.

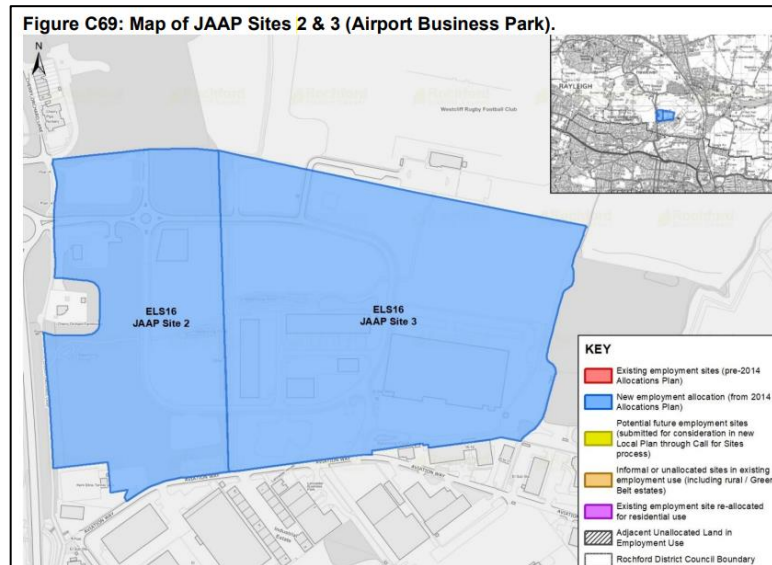


Figure 8 – Extract from ELS showing JAAP Sites 2 & 3

- 6.8 in August 2024 an application (reference 23/00829/FUL) was granted for development of plot 8 of the Airport Business Park. Furthermore, the Design Access Statement prepared in support of this application included a plan (extract of which is provided as Figure 9) which suggested that Plot 6 and Plot 7 were also in the process of being developed.
- 6.9 The remaining parcels yet to be developed appear to be fragmented by the Business Park's road network and green infrastructure, and focussed in the western part of the Business Park, around Cherry Orchard – a Grade II Listed Building, the setting of which would need to be accounted for as part of any development proposals.

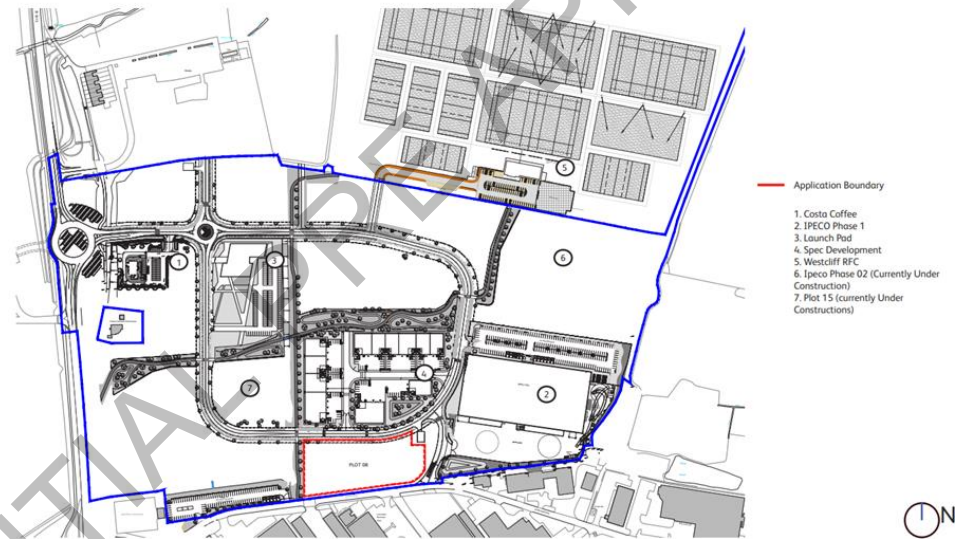


Figure 9 – Extract from DAS provided with application ref. 23/00829/FUL

- 6.10 It therefore does not appear to represent a reasonable alternative, even in purely quantitative terms.
- 6.11 Furthermore, it is notable that the ELS identifies one of the weaknesses of the Airport Business Park as its lack of public transport opportunities. In this regard, JAAP Sites 2 & 3 is not considered suitable for the proposed development – it would not ensure accessible employment for those who may not have use of a car.
- 6.12 The JAAP area is also less well located than the Site in terms of accessibility to Rochford Park.

6.13 Overall, whilst ostensibly a potential, available alternative, on closer examination it is a) unclear if sufficient land is available; and b) the area lacks the requisite public transport connectivity to achieve one of the proposed development's objectives.

6.14 In terms of existing sites, discussions with a local agent established a lack of existing, undeveloped land within employment areas that could accommodate the proposed development in Rochford District. This reaffirms the view that there is a lack of suitable alternative sites available for the proposed development within the District.

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7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed development of the Site would deliver significant environmental, economic and social benefits.
- 7.2 It would also directly contribute towards achieving, in a very sustainable way, development of Rochford Park – which itself would deliver very significant environmental, economic and social benefits.
- 7.3 The Site is in a sustainable location to accommodate the proposed development, particularly from an accessibility perspective.
- 7.4 The main constraints are the Site's current designation as Green Belt (a policy constraint), and landscape and visual impacts.
- 7.5 It is recognised that further assessment work will be required to demonstrate that the proposed development would have an acceptable impact on the highway network.
- 7.6 In respect of landscape and visual impacts, these are proposed to be substantially mitigated through use of the Site's topography and the proposed development's design. Nevertheless, there will still be a degree of landscape and visual harm, as is the case with the development of any greenfield site.
- 7.7 In terms of Green Belt, the Site is not considered to make a strong contribution to the strategic purposes of the Green Belt.
- 7.8 Furthermore, the substantial benefits of the Site's proposed development are considered to clearly outweigh any harms, to the Green Belt or otherwise.
- 7.9 There is a lack of suitable, available alternative sites within the District to accommodate the proposed development and its specific requirements.
- 7.10 Development of the factory within the District would result in substantial economic and social benefits for Rochford, as well as environmental benefits in terms of reduced mileage for transportation of products to Rochford Park. Utilising the Site to accommodate the factory would help ensure that the benefits to Rochford District of Rochford Park, and of the introduction of this house-building process into the sub-region at this scale, are maximised.