

# Briefing Note

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**Our ref** 41799/02/SP/CR  
**Date** 19 March 2019  
**To** Rossendale Borough Council  
**From** Lichfields

## **Subject** New Hall Hey Site Extensions - Update

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### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 In 2016 Rossendale Borough Council [RBC] commissioned Lichfields to update the previous Employment Land Review [ELR] undertaken in 2009. This was intended to make use of an updated economic evidence base with the aim of increasing the robustness of the economic forecasts. The scope of work was subsequently widened to include an Employment Sites Review [ESR] for the Borough in June 2016. The final study was published in May 2017 and now forms an important element of the evidence base to inform the preparation of a new Local Plan for Rossendale Borough.
- 1.2 Lichfields has now been asked by RBC to revisit our initial conclusions concerning two sites in Rawtenstall, EMP11 ((Extension of New Hall Hey to the west) and EMP72 (Extension to New Hall Hey). This is in light of the redevelopment of site EMP08, which immediately adjoins both sites, and new evidence that has been published by RBC relating to the deliverability of new infrastructure that could potentially open up both sites. As a consequence, the site pro-formas drafted for both sites, and the conclusions drawn in the ESR, are out of date.
- 1.3 Lichfields undertook site visits to EMP11 and EMP72 during March 2019 to ensure that the detailed pro-formas reflect the characteristics of both sites on the ground today. The updated pro-formas are appended to this note.

### **2.0 Findings**

- 2.1 The previous ELR concluded that neither site should be allocated for employment uses. This was primarily because they lacked the road infrastructure necessary to be attractive development propositions, despite their proximity to one of the key strategic road links in the Borough (the A56). However, in the past 18 months, site EMP08 has been largely redeveloped for trade counter uses, with a new access point delivered which could potentially open up site EMP11, and to a lesser extent EMP72, for development.
- 2.2 Both sites remain constrained to a greater or lesser degree, but on the basis that RBC can demonstrate that the necessary road infrastructure to both sites is now a viable proposition, it is considered that both sites could come forward for B-Class uses in the medium-long term:
- a **EMP11:** The site is located within close proximity to the strategic road network and is separated from the New Hall Hey business and retail park by trees and a fence line and to the south of the site, by the River Irwell. The site is designated Green Belt land in the adopted Local Plan and hence an exceptional circumstances case would need to be made by RBC in its emerging Local Plan to release this site for development. The site also has undulating topography, neighbouring residential uses, and other possible ecological constraints that may need to be mitigated. There are also a number of footpaths that would need to be incorporated or diverted [refs. 14-4-FP 310, 315 and 317]. This may reduce the net developable area. Nevertheless, if a new access road is

deliverable from the estate road within EMP08, then it is likely that there would be market demand for B-Class employment uses on the site.

- b **EMP72:** The site is currently vacant grassland which is used as informal open space. The site has a number of constraints that would need to be carefully mitigated, which may include biodiversity, flood risk, proximity to residential properties and crucially, accessibility. The site currently has no direct access to the existing road network and can only be accessed by foot via an existing public right of way [ref. 14-4-FP 318]. This crosses the East Lancashire Railway over a bridge into the site. Vehicular access could not be formed from this direction due to the limited width of the path and bridge. Access from this side is likely to be impracticable due to third party ownership constraints and existing uses as well as the need to bridge the railway. This means that any vehicular access is likely to have to come via site EMP11 and EMP08. This would still entail a bridge over the River Irwell. Given the limited size of the site it is likely that significant levels of public sector gap funding would be required to ensure that the site can come forward as planned. The viability of a new bridge in this location would require further investigation by RBC and engagement with the Environment Agency [EA] and Lead Local Flood Authority [LLFA]. If this (or an alternative access point to the east or south) is viable, then it is considered that the site could come forward for B-Class uses in the medium term (phased after EMP11).

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In summary, having revisited both sites it is considered that both sites could potentially make a contribution to meeting the requirement for new strategic employment sites in this part of Rossendale Borough. However, this is entirely dependent on delivering the necessary road infrastructure to both sites. The *Rossendale Employment Site Access Review* (August 2018) appears to indicate that this is less of an issue for EMP11 than EMP72, which is likely to require a new bridge over the River Irwell. It is emphasised that there is a high degree of uncertainty over whether such an expensive piece of infrastructure could be deliverable in this location and whether the site should be allocated for employment land as a result. This will require further evidence to be provided by RBC to justify its allocation as a consequence.

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## **Appendix 1: Updated Site Pro-formas: EMP11 and EMP72**

Extension of New Hall Hey to the west [EMP11]



**GROSS SITE AREA:**  
2.74 ha

**ESTIMATED NET DEVELOPABLE AREA:**  
2.19 ha (Assumed 80% net developable area)

CRITERIA	COMMENT	RATING
Current Use, Land Type and Planning Status	<p>The site is currently undeveloped land that is designated as Green Belt in RBC's adopted Core Strategy (2011). It is identified to be allocated for new 'high quality development' comprising B1, B2 and B8 employment uses in Policy EMP7 of RBC's Pre-Submission Publication Rossendale Draft Local Plan (August 2018) alongside part of site EMP72 to the east. The site comprises open, undulating, grassland traversed by footpaths, overhead electricity pylons and (according to RBC) underground infrastructure.</p> <p>The emerging Local Plan also identifies that the site comprises part of Rossendale's Green Infrastructure Network (Policy ENV5) [GIN], within which development proposals will be expected to support the protection, management, enhancement and connection of the Network.</p>	
Strategic Road Access	<p>New infrastructure would be required to connect the site to the existing road network. The site is approximately 0.5km from the A56 roundabout as the crow flies, which provides access to the New Hall Hey Business / Retail Park. It appears that access will be possible from this adjoining employment development. There is no direct access to the A56 from this site, and such an access is not likely to be practicable.</p>	Very Good
Local Accessibility	<p>At the time of the March 2019 site visit, New Hall Hey site EMP08 had recently been partly redeveloped, with a new access point from New Hall Hey Road connecting to the A682 utilising an existing roundabout junction. An extension of this access road would enable a vehicular access to EMP11 to be formed.</p> <p>The nearest bus stop is located within the adjacent</p>	Average

	business park beside the Old Cobblers Public House. This provides access to the Rawtenstall Circular and runs an hourly service.	
Proximity to Urban Areas and Access to Labour and Services	The site is located beyond the urban boundary of Rawtenstall. The site is approximately 1.2 km from Rawtenstall Town Centre, which includes a wide range of services and a sufficient labour supply. Although the site is rural in nature, it is part of Rawtenstall's urban fringe and is contained by existing built development.	Average
Compatibility of Adjoining Uses	The site is well contained by existing development and the River Irwell which runs to the south and east of the site. The site is bound: to the north and west by the A56; to the east by mature trees and a hedgerow (EMP08 beyond, which now contains trade counter units Screwfix and Furniture Components Ltd, as well as overspill parking for those facilities and a spoil heap); to the south-east by the River Irwell; and, to the south-west, by the curtilages of residential properties.	Average
Developmental and Environmental Constraints	<p>The site comprises undeveloped greenfield land and is designated as Green Belt in the adopted Local Plan. Whilst the emerging Local Plan seeks to allocate it for high quality B-Class employment land, the site also comprises part of the Borough's Green Infrastructure Network, with the grassland identified in the explanatory text to Policy EMP7 as being a 'stepping stone' habitat that forms part of wildlife corridors following the Irwell River Valley. It has an undulating topography, rising from the river up towards the A56. A number of mature trees are located towards the east of the site, with established woodland along the northern boundary, whilst there are residential properties to the south of the site.</p> <p>There are also a number of footpaths that would need to be incorporated or diverted [refs. 14-4-FP 310, 315 and 317].</p> <p>The vast majority of the site is located in Flood Zone 1, although a very small part of the site which is adjacent to the river to the north-east is located within Flood Zone 2 / 3. The SFRA indicates that the areas located within Flood Zone 2 / 3 are at a high risk of surface water flooding. Given the proximity of the site to the river there could also be ecological issues on the site. The Council considers that the river comprises an important wildlife habitat / corridor.</p> <p>There are overhead powerlines and (according to RBC) underground infrastructure that would need to be taken into account in any future scheme layout at the site.</p>	Average

<p>Market Attractiveness</p>	<p>The site is located in close proximity to New Hall Hey business and retail park immediately to the east, whilst an existing employment development is located to the south of the river. The site is also within close proximity to the A56 and Rawtenstall Town Centre.</p> <p>The site is currently unsupported by the necessary infrastructure required for development and is constrained by its location between the river, the A56 and existing development. However, since the first site visit in 2016, construction has been completed on the majority of New Hall Hey site EMP08, with a new access point from New Hall Hey Road connecting to the A682 utilising an existing roundabout junction.</p> <p>The <i>Rosendale Employment Site Access Review [RESAR]</i> (August 2018) sought to identify access arrangements to a series of key employment allocation sites identified within the draft Rosendale Local Plan (which included site EMP11). The report recommended that substantial benefits could be obtained by utilising the existing roundabout access from the A682 and extending the existing access road into the EMP11 site.</p> <p>Such a solution was subject to a simple assessment tool in the RESAR's option assessment, with the site coming joint top of all sites/options assessed. In particular, the authors concluded that the necessary road infrastructure was deliverable, integrated with the existing network, maximised development, promoted ease of access and was relatively cost efficient.</p> <p>Rosendale Borough Council has also confirmed that a 'reputable local commercial letting agent' has acknowledged the suitability of the site for commercial purposes.</p>	<p>Good</p>
<p>Barriers to Delivery and Timescales</p>	<p>The site is currently undeveloped; however, there are significant development and environmental constraints that need to be addressed before construction can commence. Chief amongst these is the need for a new extension of the access road constructed for New Hall Hey site EMP08. The RESAR, undertaken in August 2018, suggests that an extension of the new access road would be deliverable, although public sector gap funding may be required to ensure that the site can come forward as planned. The viability of this would need further investigation by RBC. Other constraints on the site suggest that if it were to come forward, then the net developable area may need to be reduced.</p> <p>A well-designed scheme will need to be put in place that requires careful masterplanning, given the proximity of sensitive residential uses adjoining the site's southern border. This would restrict the type of B-Class uses that could be located in this area without suitable mitigation.</p>	

	<p>Other constraints that would need to be carefully mitigated include: the site's undulating topography; the potential ecological constraints on the site and its 'stepping stone' habitat characteristics (identified by RBC); the presence of established woodland to the north; flood risk affecting a small parcel of the site to the north east; and the presence of utilities infrastructure both above and below ground.</p> <p>Given the site's constraints, and on the presumption that the extension of the road infrastructure is viable (an assessment of which is outside the scope of this study), it is envisaged that the site would come forward in 5-10 years.</p>
Potential Future Uses	With appropriate buffering to the adjacent land uses to the south; the delivery of the necessary access from EMP08; and careful masterplanning of the site to mitigate the aforementioned constraints, the site could be appropriate for a range of B-class uses. Given the topography, it is likely that this would be most suitable for B1 and/or B2 uses rather than large scale B8.
<b>OVERALL SITE RATING</b>	Good
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Allocate for employment uses

**SITE SUMMARY:**

The site is located within close proximity to the strategic road network and Rawtenstall Town Centre. The site is separated from the New Hall Hey business and retail park by trees and a fence line and, to the south of the site, by the river. The site is designated Green Belt land in the adopted Local Plan and hence an exceptional circumstances case would need to be made by RBC in its emerging Local Plan to release this site for development. The site also has undulating topography and other constraints including existing public footpaths that would need to be carefully mitigated.

Nevertheless, if a new access road is deliverable from the estate road within EMP08, then it is likely that there would be market demand for B-Class employment uses on the site. It would help meet the requirement for new strategic employment sites in this part of the Borough.

Extension to New Hall Hey [EMP72]



**GROSS SITE AREA:  
4.81ha**

**ESTIMATED NET DEVELOPABLE AREA:  
2.87 ha (Assumed 60% developable area)**

CRITERIA	COMMENT	RATING
Current Use, Land Type and Planning Status	<p>The site is currently vacant grassland. The adopted Core Strategy (2011) Proposals Map identifies the north eastern triangular corner of the site as 'Greenland', whilst the remainder of the site is non-designated 'White Land'. Most of the site, comprising the central area, is identified as a potential allocation for new 'high quality development' comprising B1, B2 and B8 employment uses in Policy EMP7 of RBC's Pre-Submission Publication Rossendale Draft Local Plan (August 2018) alongside site EMP11 to the west. The site is currently used informally for recreational purposes by local residents and dog walkers.</p> <p>The emerging Local Plan also identifies that all of the site (including the remainder of the site to the north east and south-west that does not form part of Policy EMP7) comprises part of Rossendale's Green Infrastructure Network (Policy ENV5) [GIN], within which development proposals will be expected to support the protection, management, enhancement and connection of the Network.</p>	
Strategic Road Access	<p>The site is approximately 0.6km from the A56 roundabout as the crow flies, which provides access to the New Hall Hey Business / Retail Park. However, at present there is no direct road access to the A56 from this site with the River Irwell between the site and these adjoining employment areas.</p>	Very Good
Local Accessibility	<p>The site is not currently accessible via the local road network and can currently only be accessed by foot, via a footbridge across the River Irwell in the north-west corner of the site, and a steep and narrow footpath joining to Bury Road to the east (running parallel with the residential properties).</p> <p>At the time of the March 2019 site visit, New Hall Hey site EMP08 had been constructed, with a new access point</p>	Average*



	<p>from New Hall Hey Road connecting to the A682 utilising an existing roundabout junction. An extension of this access road, constructed for New Hall Hey site EMP08, would enable EMP11 to be accessible by motor vehicle and, via a bridge across the river to the south-east, this would potentially open up site EMP72 to development. The only other potential access point to the southwest, around the electricity sub-station, may be too narrow for HGV vehicular movements and there are also likely to be land ownership issues over this potential secondary access point.</p> <p><b>*If this bridge is deliverable, then the local accessibility would be rated as ‘average’; if, however, high costs rendered the scheme unviable, then the rating would need to be downgraded to ‘Very Poor’. Further work is therefore required by RBC on this issue.</b></p> <p>A bus service operates through the New Hall Hey Business / Retail Park, immediately to the north east of the site and provides access to Rawtenstall. A bus service is also in operation along Bury Road to the south of the site (with a bus stop immediately beside the public footpath) and along Haslingden Road to the north of the site providing access to the wider Borough and Bury.</p>	
Proximity to Urban Areas and Access to Labour and Services	The site is located in Rawtenstall, within the Urban Boundary. Rawtenstall is identified as a primary urban area within the Borough and has excellent access to labour supply and services. Although the site is rural in nature, it is part of Rawtenstall’s urban fringe.	Good
Compatibility of Adjoining Uses	The site abuts the New Hall Hey Business / Retail Park to the north east, albeit it is separated by woodland and the River Irwell. The site is bound: to the north by grassland (EMP08); to the north-east by the New Hall Hey Business Park; to the south and east by residential properties and the East Lancashire Railway line; to the west, by the River Irwell and site EMP11; and to the south by an Electricity North West [ENW] / United Utilities electricity sub-station (EMP46).	Average
Developmental and Environmental Constraints	The site is currently undeveloped and comprises vacant grassland which is used as informal open space. The site has a relatively flat topography and is predominantly located within Flood Zone 1. The SFRA indicates that the land immediately adjacent to the river is located in Flood Zone 3. A substation and pylon lie on its immediate southern edge. A number of mature trees are located within the site on its north-eastern corner which, combined with the changing topography of this area down from the central plateau, are likely to reduce the net developable	Average / Poor

	<p>area of the wider site.</p> <p>Whilst the emerging Local Plan seeks to allocate much of the site for high quality B-Class employment land, the site also comprises part of the Borough's Green Infrastructure Network. The grassland is identified in the explanatory text to Policy EMP7 as being a 'stepping stone' habitat that forms part of wildlife corridors following the Irwell River Valley.</p> <p>The site can only be accessed by foot via an existing public right of way [ref. 14-4-FP 318]. This crosses the East Lancashire Railway over a bridge into the site. Vehicular access could not be formed from this direction due to the limited width of the path and bridge. Access from this side is likely to be impracticable due to third party ownership constraints and existing uses as well as the need to bridge the railway. This means that any vehicular access is likely to have to come via site EMP11 and EMP08. This would still entail a bridge over the River Irwell.</p> <p>Given the current use of the site, the mature woodland on the northern portion of the site and its proximity to the river, the site may have ecological constraints.</p>	
Market Attractiveness	<p>The site could serve as an extension to the New Hall Hey Business / Retail Park. The site is located in close proximity to the strategic road network and Rawtenstall Town Centre.</p> <p>The site is currently unsupported by the necessary infrastructure required for development and is constrained by its location between the River Irwell to the west, and the East Lancashire Railway to the east. However, since the first site visit in 2016, construction has been completed on New Hall Hey site EMP08, with a new access point from New Hall Hey Road connecting to the A682 utilising an existing roundabout junction.</p> <p>The <i>Rossendale Employment Site Access Review [RESAR]</i> (August 2018) sought to identify access arrangements to a series of key employment allocation sites identified within the draft Rossendale Local Plan (which included site EMP72).</p> <p>The report concluded that access options to this site are limited and the only feasible option available for consideration is to access the site from the roundabout junctions on the A682 and New Hall Hey Road and utilise the proposed extended access road for the New Hall Hey site EMP11 with a link heading south towards the river. A new bridge across the river may be required to provide</p>	Good*

	<p>access to the site.</p> <p>Such a solution was subject to a simple assessment tool in the RESAR's option assessment, with the site coming towards the middle of all sites/options assessed. Whilst it scored highly in terms of maximising development and integrating with the existing network, the site scored poorly in terms of environmental constraint, physical constraints and cost implications.</p> <p>Rossendale Borough Council has also confirmed that a 'reputable local commercial letting agent' has acknowledged the suitability of the site for commercial purposes.</p> <p>*It is understood that further technical reports are being undertaken regarding the costs and likely deliverability/viability of a bridge in this location. If such a structure were deliverable, then the market attractiveness of this site would be rated as 'good'; if, however, high costs rendered the scheme unviable, then the rating would need to be downgraded to Average at best. Further work is therefore required by RBC on this issue.</p>	
<p>Barriers to Delivery and Timescales</p>	<p>The central part of the site is currently undeveloped, flat and relatively open in nature.</p> <p>However, there are significant constraints that would need to be addressed before construction can commence. Chief amongst these is the need for a new extension of the access road constructed for New Hall Hey site EMP08 and potentially, a new bridge across the River Irwell from site EMP11 to the north. The RESAR, undertaken in August 2018, suggests that whilst an extension of the new access road may be deliverable, there are significant question marks over the viability of a bridge at this location that would be critical to opening up the land for development.</p> <p>It is likely that significant levels of public sector gap funding may be required to ensure that the site can come forward as planned. The viability of a new bridge in this location would need further investigation by RBC. Other constraints on the site suggest that if it were to come forward, then the net developable area may need to be reduced significantly.</p> <p>A well -designed scheme will need to be put in place that requires careful masterplanning, given the proximity of sensitive residential uses adjoining the site's eastern border past the East Lancashire Railway line. This would restrict the type of B-Class uses that could be located in this area without suitable mitigation, due to flood risk and the presence of mature woodland on part of the site and its 'stepping stone' habitat characteristics.</p> <p>Significant infrastructure work and the laying of new roads would</p>	

	therefore be required to support the development of the site. It is therefore considered that if this is found to be deliverable, then the site could come forward in the next 10-15 years.
Potential Future Uses	With appropriate buffering to the adjacent land uses to the east; the delivery of the necessary access from EMP08/EMP11; and careful masterplanning of the site to mitigate the aforementioned constraints, the site could be appropriate for a range of B-class uses. Given the site's topography, it is likely that this would be most suitable for B1 and/or B2 uses rather than large scale B8. Viability will be key to the site's delivery, which may depend on the cost of a new bridge to provide an access point across the River Irwell from site EMP11.
<b>OVERALL SITE RATING</b>	Average
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	Allocate for employment uses

**SITE SUMMARY:**

The site is currently vacant grassland which is used as informal open space. The site has a number of constraints that would need to be carefully mitigated. This may include biodiversity, flood risk, proximity to residential properties and crucially, accessibility. The site currently has no direct access to the existing road network and can only be accessed by foot via an existing public right of way [ref. 14-4-FP 318]. This crosses the East Lancashire Railway over a bridge into the site. Vehicular access could not be formed from this direction due to the limited width of the path and bridge. Access from this side is likely to be impracticable due to third party ownership constraints and existing uses as well as the need to bridge the railway. This means that any vehicular access is likely to have to come via site EMP11 and EMP08. This would still entail a bridge over the River Irwell.

Given the limited size of the site it is likely that significant levels of public sector gap funding would be required to ensure that the site can come forward as planned. The viability of a new bridge in this location would require further investigation by RBC and engagement with the Environment Agency [EA] and Lead Local Flood Authority [LLFA]. If this (or an alternative access point to the east or south) is viable, then it is considered that the site could come forward for B-Class uses in the medium term (phased after EMP11). However, it is acknowledged that there is currently a high degree of uncertainty over whether such an expensive piece of infrastructure could be deliverable in this location and whether the site should be allocated for employment land as a result. This will require further evidence to be provided by RBC.