



Statement to Support Application for Permission in Principle

Residential Development of Land at Macclesfield Main Road, Buxton

Introduction

This statement supports an application for Permission in Principle to establish the acceptability in policy terms of developing a parcel of land with direct access onto Macclesfield Main Road for residential purposes. The site is large enough to accommodate up to 3 small units.

Under Article 5D of the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) an application for PiP requires only:

- (a) a completed application form
- (b) a plan which identifies the land to which the application relates, drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North
- (c) the correct application fee.

Site & Surroundings

The 0.1 Ha site lies on the southern side of Macclesfield Main Road (A54) circa 100m away from its junction with Leek Road (A53). It consists of a small former quarry site that had been subject to tipping. The site was cleared and levelled (with permission) in the late 1980s and was returned to grassland. The site has direct access onto Macclesfield Main Road.

The site's levels rise from north to south with the southern site boundary being circa 3 metres higher than the boundary with the road. The site is demarcated by a post and wire fence to the north, south and west, and a leylandii hedge to the east.

For planning policy purposes, the site is located within open countryside.

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RTPI

Chartered Town Planner

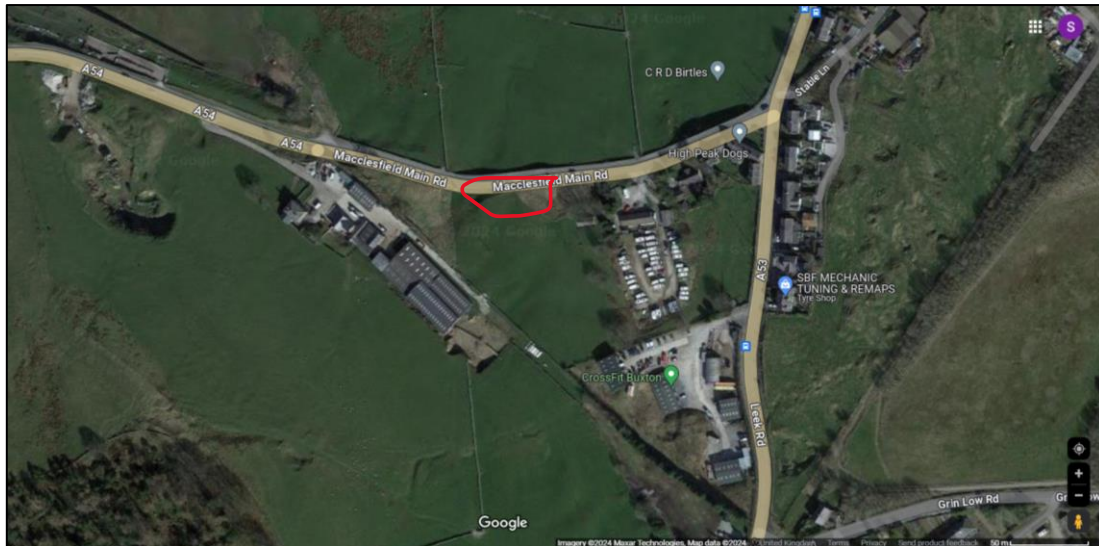


Fig 1: Site in context of surroundings. Source: Google Earth

To the east and south east of the site is a caravan storage facility that takes access from Macclesfield Main Road just east of the application site, and projects southwards into the open countryside. To the south of that is the Ladmanlow Yard accessed off Leek Road, which has developed into a small industrial estate. The caravan storage facility and the industrial estate now form a continuous band of development that stretches from Macclesfield Main Road to Leek Road (see fig 1).

To the west, the site adjoins a field parcel which lies immediately east of a large farmstead characterised by dark grey, portal framed, modern agricultural buildings which are clearly visible from the road. Their higher level means that they skyline in views from the A54.

Further east, beyond the caravan storage, are domestic properties from various different time periods, these dwellings lie within the settlement boundary of Buxton. These dwellings and the caravan yard form a continuous line of development along the south side of the A54 up to the application site. When leaving Buxton along the A54, the site is seen within the context of this surrounding development.

200m to the north of Macclesfield Main Road, a significant amount of residential development has taken place over the last 20 years on an allocated development site. This has changed the character and appearance of the town of Buxton from western approaches.

Although in open countryside for policy purposes, the foregoing demonstrates that the site cannot be considered to be in an isolated location. Instead, it should be considered to be in an edge of settlement location.

The speed limit adjacent to the site is 50mph but vehicle speeds are suppressed due to proximity to the Leek Road junction and parked cars along the southern side of the A54. Road geometry adjacent to the site is favourable, with good visibility available in both directions.

The site lies 160m from the nearest bus stop on the A53, and 335m from the small convenience store at the petrol filling station on Leek Road to the north east.

The site is not in a Conservation Area, does not form the setting of any listed buildings, and is not in a flood risk zone.

Planning History

The site was cleared, levelled and seeded for grazing in 1989 (Ref 028620). In 1999 an application (HPK/0003/8158) was submitted for residential development but refused for being unsustainably located in open countryside and for being unable to demonstrate safe access onto the highway.

A planning application was submitted in 2014 for part of the field parcel to the west of the current application site. This proposed a new eco-house and was refused on the basis of its open countryside location, design, and concerns about highway safety. This site is some 300m further from the settlement boundary than the current application site.

Policy Context

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)

Paragraph 82 states that in rural areas planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing development that reflects local needs. Local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs, and consider whether allowing some market housing on these sites would help facilitate this.

High Peak Local Plan (2016)

The site is located within the Buxton Sub-Area. Policy S7 provides a strategy for this area which includes protecting and enhancing the unique character of Buxton's townscape and natural environment. New housing development should generally be directed to within the settlement boundary.

Policy EQ2 seeks to protect, enhance and restore landscape character and resists development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of the settlement.

Under policy EQ3, outside settlement boundaries, new development will be strictly controlled in order to protect landscape character and distinctiveness. Affordable housing in accordance with policy H5 may be acceptable, as would housing to meet an essential local need.

Under policy H1, the council will give consideration to approving sustainable sites outside of the defined built up area boundaries provided that the development would adjoin the built up area boundary and be well related to the existing pattern of development and surrounding land uses; would not lead to a prominent intrusion into the countryside; would have reasonable access on foot, bike and public transport to services; and local infrastructure can meet any additional requirements arising from development.

Rural exception sites are dealt with under policy H5. Here, proposals for affordable housing on rural sites that would not normally be released for housing development will be supported provided that the size and type of development can be justified by reference to evidence of local need, that the housing will remain affordable, that the site is located within or adjoining a settlement boundary and is adequately served by existing services and facilities.

Discussion

Whilst located in open countryside, the site is immediately adjacent to development that stretches westwards from the settlement boundary in an uninterrupted line. The site cannot be considered to be in an isolated location, and is within walking distance of a shop and public transport infrastructure and so meet the requirements of policy H1. The surrounding site context is now very different to that in 1999 when the last application on the site was refused. Bringing the site forward for a well-designed residential development would have little impact on landscape character under policy EQ2 and EQ3 given the nature of surrounding land uses. A small, roadside development would not create a prominent intrusion into the countryside, particularly with reference to the caravan storage yard beside it.

The Council can demonstrate a 6.4 year housing land supply (April 2023) and so there is no current basis upon which to bring the site forward for residential development to meet a general housing need. There is, however, some opportunity for affordable housing on the site under policies H1 or H5, or rural housing to meet an essential local need under policy H5. The site could also be suitable for self-build (H1).

Any application for technical details consent would need to be supported by a geotechnical survey, Biodiversity Net Gain proposals, an assessment of nutrient neutrality, and a Transport Survey that would include a speed survey. At this stage, this application for Permission in Principle seeks only to establish whether the site could be acceptable for residential development, of restricted tenure or otherwise, in accordance with the legislation.

Conclusion

This site could be brought forward for affordable housing or housing to meet an essential local need. Up to 3 units could be accommodated on the site in a manner that would comply with Development Plan policy and guidance contained in the NPPF.