

Classification	Item No.
Open	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Meeting:	Annual Council
Meeting date:	21 st May 2025
Title of report:	JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE
Report by:	HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
Decision Type:	Council
Ward(s) to which report relates	All

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The report outlines the draft arrangements and terms of reference for a joint planning committee between Rochdale and Bury councils to determine planning and related applications at Northern Gateway, Places for Everyone sites JP Allocations 1.1 and 1.2.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Following the Council's Planning Control Committee noting the report at the Committee held on the 22nd April 2025. The report is to recommend to full Council to approve the establishment of a Joint Planning Committee with Rochdale Council, in accordance with the draft Terms of Reference, to determine planning and related applications at Northern Gateway, Places for Everyone Allocations JPA 1.1 and JPA 1.2.

1.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 1.1 The Places for Everyone Plan allocates sites for employment and housing, including the Northern Gateway sites, which will provide an unrivalled opportunity to deliver an economic and productivity boost for Greater Manchester, secure inward investment, create new job and training opportunities, deliver much-needed new homes, and unlock community benefits and social value. There are two Northern Gateway allocations, one predominantly employment (JPA1.1) and the other residential (JPA1.2). Both allocations extend across the administrative districts of Bury and Rochdale.
- 1.2 The scale of the allocations at Northern Gateway is significant and transformational. Development of the allocations in Places for Everyone Plan will deliver up to 1,200,000 square metres of industrial and warehousing floorspace and around 3,000 dwellings across Bury and Rochdale. There is a need to align the planning process across the districts to ensure that planning matters are determined appropriately within the overall context of the above.
- 1.3 The proposal is that a Joint Planning Committee is formed of Members of both Rochdale and Bury Councils to jointly determine applications as set out in the terms of reference attached at appendix one and within the geographical area as per the plan at appendix two. In

summary, the committee would generally only deal with applications of a strategic nature only and where the red edge crossed both administrative areas.

- 1.4 The main advantage is to streamline the decision-making process and bring consistency, there being one report and thus one decision. Legally, for applications that cross the boundary, there will still be a requirement for both authorities to each receive and issue a decision notice. However, the Joint Planning Committee would ensure that they would be identical in terms of the conditions attached.

2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The alternative is that current arrangements prevail. Applications for strategic development at Northern Gateway would be determined by each individual district. For development to proceed cross boundary, it would be dependent on separate approvals from each council through their own decision-making arrangements. Each would issue a separate decision notice on the basis of the outcome. Whilst each Local Planning Authority would endeavour to work closely, this would most likely result in decisions being taken at different times, it being dependent on the scheme of delegation to officers and the timing and lead in for the respective planning committee meetings in each district. There is also the potential for different conditions to be attached to each planning permission, which, at worst, would be in conflict. Please note, that this approach may be considered the appropriate route to take on some planning applications within the allocations if it is deemed more appropriate to do so once the complexities of planning applications are considered.

3.0 KEY INFORMATION

BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Places for Everyone (PfE) was adopted as part of the development plan for Bury and eight other Greater Manchester districts in March 2024. The plan allocates two sites at Northern Gateway that cross the boundary between Bury and Rochdale. JP Allocation 1.1 Heywood/Pilsworth is located to the north of the M62 and is allocated primarily for employment; and JP Allocation 1.2 at Simister/Bowlee is allocated for residential development. The allocations came about as a result of close working between the councils over a number of years. JPA 1.1 also forms part of the Greater Manchester Investment Zone, one of only eight such zones within the UK. These zones are designed to have a range of business incentive measures, one of which is to simplify and accelerate planning decision making and use retained business rates locally to drive economic growth. The operation of the Investment Zone would be subject of separate working arrangements to be put in place with Bury and Rochdale Councils and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA).
- 3.2 In March 2025, Cabinet approved the creation of a Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) as the preferred delivery vehicle for the site, as did Rochdale Council. GMCA subsequently agreed to endorse the proposal and consult on the establishment of an MDC.
- 3.3 Bury and Rochdale Councils have a track record of working together and have already secured allocation of the sites at Northern Gateway for development. The above shows that both Councils are committed to continue the working closely to bring about the transformational change envisaged. It therefore makes sense to consider how best to deal with planning matters within this context to ensure consistency in approach and outcome.

JOINT PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 3.4 Establishing a Joint Planning Committee would ensure that decisions are timely and consistent. The terms of reference attached would ensure that an equal number of members from each district will sit on the committee. Each Council would appoint a Chair and these will be the chairs of the district planning committees. The Chair of the Joint Committee meeting would be from the authority that has the largest land area in the application site. i.e. if 70% of the application site is within Rochdale, the Chair from Rochdale Council would chair the meeting for that application and vice versa.

3.5 It remains the case that each Local Planning Authority would be responsible for processing and issuing non-strategic decisions on the applications made to it. Planning and related applications would continue to be submitted to and dealt with by each individual Council. However, applications of a strategic nature that meet the criteria set out in the terms of reference and are located within the relevant boundary, would be determined by the Joint Planning Committee. It should be noted that the terms of reference also include other provisions in the interests of transparency that may result in smaller applications coming before the committee, but the number of applications is expected to be very low.

3.6 Rochdale Council granted outline planning permission in March 2020 for the first phase of development at the Northern Gateway, at South Heywood. This included the Queen Elizabeth Way link road to J19, 167,000 square metres of industrial and warehousing floorspace and 1,000 new homes. Although this site is part of the allocation at JPA 1.1 in PfE, it is excluded from the boundary for the Joint Planning Committee because planning permission has already been granted.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 There are no specific finance matters arising.

5.0 LEGAL

5.1 The Council has the power to enter into joint arrangements with one or more local authorities to exercise functions which are not executive functions in any of the participating authorities, or to advise the Council. Such arrangements may involve the appointment of a Joint Committee with other local authorities.

5.2 Section 101(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 enables two or more local authorities to discharge any of their functions by a Joint Committee.

5.3 The Council has the power to decide to set up a joint Committee, to appoint Councillors to that Joint Committee and to delegate particular powers to it that would otherwise be the responsibility of the Council.

5.4 The development control functions are non-executive functions, they are contained within Schedule 1 to the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities)(England) Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/2853).

5.5 The establishing of any Joint Committee may result in the need to amend the Council's Scheme of Delegation and Constitution to reflect the changes.

7.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS(CORPORATE PRIORITIES, RISKS)

7.1 There are no relevant considerations of this report.

IMPLICATIONS:	
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	Executive Director of Place to advise regarding risk management
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	N/A
Equality/Diversity implications:	No

Considered by Monitoring Officer:	N/A
Wards Affected:	Unsworth & Holyrood
Scrutiny Interest:	N/A

List of Background Papers:-

Appendix – Terms of Reference;
Appendix - Joint Planning Committee boundary

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