

# Simister Bowlee Development Framework

## Consultation Statement

June 2026

**Bury**  
Council

**Bury**  
Council



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# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Bury and Rochdale Councils have jointly prepared the Simister Bowlee Development Framework (SBDF) Joint Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).
- 1.2 The SBDF has been prepared in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 1.3 Regulation 12(a) requires the Councils to produce a consultation statement before adoption of the SPD. This statement must set out who was consulted, a summary of the issues raised, and how these issues were incorporated into the SPD.
- 1.4 Regulation 12(b) requires the Council to publish the documents (including a 'consultation statement') for a minimum of 4-week consultation, specify the date when responses should be received, and identify the address to which responses should be sent.
- 1.5 Regulation 13 stipulates that any person may make representations about the draft SPD and that the representations must be made by the end of the consultation date referred to in Regulation 12.
- 1.6 Regulation 12 states that when seeking representations on an SPD, documents must be made available in accordance with Regulation 35. This requires the Council to make documents available by taking the following steps:
  - Make the document available at the principal office and other places within the area that the Council considers appropriate; and
  - Publish the document on the Council's website.
- 1.7 This Consultation Statement sets out the extent of the consultation and engagement undertaken on the draft SBDF, highlights the issues raised and how the document was amended to reflect the issues raised.

## 2. Engagement during the preparation of the draft SBDF

- 2.1 The role of the SBDF is to effectively bridge the gap between the allocation of the site in Places for Everyone (PfE) and the subsequent detail of the development that will emerge through planning applications on the site.
- 2.2 The preparation of the SBDF has enabled key issues to be identified and addressed to the satisfaction of all parties at an early stage in the planning process. Fundamentally, the SBDF establishes the parameters against which future planning applications will be considered and identifies the necessary infrastructure required to support the development of the site.
- 2.3 The SBDF has been prepared jointly by Bury and Rochdale Councils (hereafter collectively referred to as ‘the Councils’) with technical input from the Northern Gateway Development Vehicle (NGDV) as the main site promoter and input from other landowners/stakeholders, including Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), Environment Agency (EA) and United Utilities (UU). This engagement helped to identify and understand expectations and key issues around the delivery of the site during the early stages of preparing the SBDF.
- 2.4 The following table sets out the key issues raised during the internal engagement and how these have been addressed in the draft SBDF.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>How was this incorporated into the SBDF</b>
How will development be phased within the allocation?	Reflected in SBDF which identifies that development is expected to come forward in a series of phases alongside necessary infrastructure provision and a flexible approach which is responsive to

Issue	How was this incorporated into the SBDF
	opportunities. This approach does not restrict the potential for later phases to be accelerated where opportunities arise, or where infrastructure allows certain phases to be advanced, earlier than currently envisaged.
When will the infrastructure be delivered	Reflected in SBDF which specifies that infrastructure will be co-ordinated with the delivery of new homes and will be subject to triggers for implementation of infrastructure.
Concerns that some areas would be excluded from the masterplanning process	Reflected in SBDF which requires a comprehensive approach to development

### 3. Screening Assessments

#### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening

- 3.1 A Screening Statement has been prepared to determine whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEAA) would be required for the SBDF. As required by relevant Regulations the Councils consulted Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency over a four-week period (11<sup>th</sup> September 2025 – 13<sup>th</sup> October 2025) in order to seek their views on the conclusions of the SEA Screening Assessment.
- 3.2 Responses were received from all three bodies, all of whom agreed with the Councils that the above assessment would not be required to accompany the SPD.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening

- 3.3 The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) were consulted on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2025. GMEU agreed with the Councils conclusion that the SBDF would not require a full HRA.

## 4. Consultation

- 4.1 The draft SBDF was approved for consultation by Rochdale Council's Cabinet on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and Bury Council's Cabinet of the 11<sup>th</sup> February 2026. Consultation on this draft subsequently took place over a six-week period running from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026 to Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026.
- 4.2 In Bury, all relevant documentation was available to view on the Council's website, copies of the document was made available for inspection electronically at Bury Town Hall between the hours of 8.45am and 5.00pm (Monday-Friday) and at local libraries and the Tottington Centre during their normal working hours (see [www.bury.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.bury.gov.uk/libraries) and [www.tottingtoncentre.co.uk](http://www.tottingtoncentre.co.uk) for details). Paper copies of the draft SBDF were also available in these locations.
- 4.3 The Simister Bowlee webpage on Bury Council's website received 912 views whilst the general Bury PfE Strategic Sites page received 2568 views. The Rochdale Northern Gateway planning webpage received 138 views with 75 active users.
- 4.4 In Rochdale, all relevant documentation was available to view on the Council's website, copies of the document were made available for inspection electronically at all local libraries during their normal working hours (see [Local libraries and customer service centres | Rochdale Borough Council](#)) for details). In addition, paper copies of the draft SBDF and comments forms were put in the four main borough libraries – Heywood, Littleborough, Middleton and Rochdale.

- 4.5 Social media was utilised to promote the consultation, engagement events and the availability of detailed information on the council's website.
- 4.6 Bury Council posted 13 times on Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) from 13 February to 27 March 2026.
- 4.7 On Facebook, there were 38,408 views across all 13 posts. The highest performing post achieved 17,515 views with an engagement rate of 14.97%. In terms of engagement rate on Facebook, this ranged from 1.83% (good) to 14.97% (excellent). On X the engagement ranged from 2.17% (good) to 11.3% (excellent). Impressions (on-screen appearances) across all posts totalled 4,340 with an average of around 250 per post.
- 4.8 Contacts on Bury Council's and Rochdale Council's development plans consultation databases were notified directly of the consultation. Posters and leaflets were distributed in key locations. The Councils also held a series of drop-in events, where Planning Officers were able to answer questions on the draft SBDF. These were held on:
- Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February – Radcliffe Market – 4-8pm
  - Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February – Elton High School – 4-8pm
  - Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February – Parrenthorn High School – 4-8pm
  - Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March – Edgar Wood Academy – 4-8pm
- 4.9 A total of 346 people attended the drop-in sessions across the two Boroughs. The events in Bury presented information on the SBDF and Development Frameworks on two other strategic sites (Elton Reservoir and Walshaw). The key purpose of the drop-ins was to give residents an opportunity to view the material early in the consultation programme, ask questions of officers, and receive guidance on how to submit formal written representations.
- 4.10 Comments were encouraged to be submitted online via Bury Council's website [www.bury.gov.uk/strategicsites](http://www.bury.gov.uk/strategicsites) or Rochdale Council's website <https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/NorthernGateway> which directed users to the designated consultation portal.

- 4.11 Responses by email were requested to be sent to [strategicsites@bury.gov.uk](mailto:strategicsites@bury.gov.uk) or [strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk)
- 4.12 Alternatively, responses could be returned by post to the following addresses:  
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
3 Knowsley Place  
Duke Street  
Bury  
BL9 0EJ
- Or
- Strategic Planning  
Rochdale Borough Council  
Floor 3, Number One Riverside  
Smith Street  
Rochdale, OL16 1XU
- 4.13 Those requiring further information on the draft SBDF were asked to contact a member of Bury's Strategic Planning and Infrastructure team on 0161 253 5550 or a member of Rochdale's Strategic Planning Team on 01706 924252 or email [strategicsites@bury.gov.uk](mailto:strategicsites@bury.gov.uk) or [strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk)
- 4.14 Examples of the consultation materials are included in Appendix 1.

## 5. Representations

- 5.1 Bury and Rochdale Councils received a total of 224 responses to the draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework. 39 responses of these were via the on-line consultation portal. 185 responses received were via email or post.

- 5.2 A further 42 joint responses were submitted which were a combined response to the Elton Reservoir, Walshaw and Simister Bowlee Development Frameworks
- 5.3 A summary of the issues raised during the formal consultation period and informally at the drop in sessions is provided below. Details of how the Councils have responded to those issues in the preparation of the final SBDF is also provided below.
- 5.4 Several respondents included photographs of recent flood events and traffic collisions in support of their response and one respondent included a photograph of a newt found within the fishing lake on the site. These photographs have all been noted.

## 6. Summary of the main issues raised during the consultation

### Principle of Development

- 6.1 A significant number of comments related to the perception that the site was still located in the Green Belt and there is a failure to meet NPPR requirements (paragraphs 143, 145 and 153). The Simister Bowlee site has already been removed from the Green Belt and allocated for housing through PfE. PfE was subject to a comprehensive two-year Examination in Public, where independent Planning Inspectors considered all the evidence and representations made around the plan (including extensive objections on the site allocations) asked detailed questions about key aspects of the Plan including each proposed allocation; and held in-person Examination sessions where interested parties could respond to key Matters, Issues and Questions raised by the Inspectors.
- 6.2 A key part of the examination was for the Inspectors to assess whether PfE was prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether it was sound i.e. that it was positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. The legal outcome of that process removed the site from the Green Belt and it is now established site for housing development. The principle of residential development on the site at Simister Bowlee is therefore not a debate that can be re-

opened. All the supporting evidence relating to Places for Everyone is available at <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/planning-and-housing/strategic-planning/places-for-everyone/>

### **Evidence that Supports the SBDF**

- 6.3 In addition, a significant number of comments related to the lack of evidence supporting the SBDF. At this stage of the planning process the evidence is proportionate to the fact that the SBDF is still a strategic plan that provides an indicative masterplan. It drew on evidence that supported the allocation of the site. Planning applications within the site will need to provide detailed and up-to-date evidence, demonstrate consistency with the SBDF and demonstrate that they would not compromise the comprehensive development of the whole site. This will include a site-wide Transport Assessment to assess the impact of development on the highways network; ecology surveys to identify existing wildlife habitats, including protected species; and to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are put in place and flood and drainage strategies to ensure that any flood risk issues are addressed and mitigated for.
- 6.4 In respect of the procedural and legal comments, the SBDF has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Regulations) 2012 (as amended).
- 6.5 The amendments made to the SBDF have focussed on dealing with specific responses relevant to the document itself as the principle of residential development on the site has already been established and is not a matter for the SBDF or the consultation process. Likewise, updated evidence will be available to review when planning applications are submitted.

### **Key Issues Raised in Consultation**

- 6.6 The following highlights the key issues raised in response to the consultation on the draft SBDF and the Councils response to these.

### **Comments Received - Traffic Congestion and Highway Safety**



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- Heywood Old Road (A6045) is described as already at or beyond capacity, with daily gridlock, unsafe crossings, vibration damage to homes, and frequent accidents.
- Capacity concerns regarding the M60/M62/M66 and in particular Jn 19.
- Strong concern over cumulative impacts of:
  - 1,550 new homes
  - A new primary school
  - The Northern Gateway employment site (JPA1.1)
- Concern regarding historic refusals of much smaller schemes on safety grounds.
- Concern that there has been inconsistent decision making, for example dropped kerbs or minor access works being refused while major new access points are proposed.
- Concern that there is no confirmed, agreed cumulative transport modelling and the developer-led modelling is still ongoing and not publicly available.
- Concern that there is a risk that mitigation is undefined, unsecured or deferred to later stages, undermining confidence in deliverability.
- Concern about highway safety along Heywood Old Road
- Calls for:
  - Post-2022, post-pandemic traffic surveys
  - A composite traffic model for JPA1.1 + JPA1.2
  - A Stage 1 Road Safety Audit for school access

### **Council Response - Traffic Congestion & Highway Safety**

- At this stage of the planning process, the evidence is proportionate to the fact that the Simister Bowlee Development Framework is still a strategic plan that provides an indicative layout.

- As the site comes forward with a planning application, more up to date and detailed transport modelling will be required to be undertaken through a Transport Assessment (TA) which will form part of the supporting documents for the application.
- The TA will need to address assess the impacts on traffic and consider alterations and/or mitigations to ensure that the proposal is acceptable in highways terms having regard to the network and highway safety across the whole site. In assessing planning applications regard will be had to the Transport Assessment and any necessary mitigations to make the proposal acceptable in highway and planning terms.
- TAs submitted with planning applications will need to consider all developments in the locality cumulatively and model both the phased housing trips from JPA 1.2 with the projected HGV movements from JPA 1.1 (Northern Gateway).
- As well as dealing with the type and volume of traffic any TA or proposed layouts would need to address highway safety for all users. This would need to take into account highway safety around existing and proposed schools where relevant to the assessment.

#### **Proposed Amendments – Traffic Congestion & Highways Safety**

- Section 7.3 of the SPD has been amended to strengthen the wording in terms of how Transport Assessments should fully consider the highway and transport impacts of the entire site and the cumulative impacts of JPA1.1 and other consented sites in the area ". The TA should fully consider access, highways and active travel strategy and include detailed technical assessment and feasibility work and that the Local Highways Authorities must fully agree the transport measures, interventions and mitigation required.
- Section 6.1 (Masterplan Framework) & Section 7.3 (Indicative, Movement, Access and Highways Plan) – change to annotation relating to roundabout access at the northern access to allow for alternative solutions if more appropriate.

- Section 7.1 Design – reference to GM Streets for all design guidance in relation to place-making and urban design quality.

### **Comments Received - Public Transport & Sustainability**

- Concern that there is no reliable bus service along Heywood Old Road since around 2012, with recent routes withdrawn or curtailed.
- Concern that congestion would prevent reliable bus operation, undermining sustainable travel claims.
- Respondents believe the development increases car dependency, contrary to national and PfE policy.
- Concern that the SBDF lacks clear walking/cycling routes to employment areas (JPA1.1)

### **Council Response - Public Transport & Sustainability**

- We are aware of the lack of services along Heywood Old Road and the need to improve the alternatives to car use. TfGM have confirmed that a service along Heywood Old Road will be provided during the build out of the site to connect with key locations.
- Continuing to only promote options that support car users will further undermine reliable bus operation and therefore a balanced, sustainable transport strategy for the site is planned. In particular, options are being considered for an upgrade to cycle infrastructure along Heywood Old Road which, by providing an alternative parking location for on-street parking would significantly improve the flow of traffic along Heywood Old Road for all users (including buses) as well as providing safe cycling facilities.
- Due to the balanced, sustainable transport strategy planned for the site, as outlined above, an increase in car dependency is not envisaged. In accordance with national and PfE policy, as part of the planning application the developer will need to start with a vision of what the

development/allocation is seeking to achieve and then test a set of scenarios to determine the optimum design and transport infrastructure to realise this vision.

- The SBDF relates the PfE allocated site but does not acknowledge the potential to improve connectivity in the immediate vicinity of the site and outside of the allocation.

### **Proposed Amendments – Public Transport & Sustainability**

- Section 3.2.1 (Opportunities) has been updated to make reference to the fact that the site benefits from close proximity and legible routes via A6045/A756.
- Section 3.2.2 (Opportunities) has been strengthened to add reference to bus stops to improve connectivity.
- Section 4.1 (The Vision and Opportunity) refers to improved transport infrastructure.
- Section 6.1 (Masterplan Framework) has been amended to include an alternative local centre location to allow flexibility for public transport and active travel.
- Section 6.1 (Masterplan Framework) –Bullet 1 of key – added in reference to active travel access.
- Section 6.1 (Masterplan Framework) –Bullet 6 of key – added in reference to public transport.
- Section 7.3 (Access, Highways and Movement) – paragraph - added in reference to the provision of bus services to elevate the accessibility and sustainability of the site.

### **Comments Received - Drainage, Flood Risk & Utilities**

- Future applications should include comprehensive Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs).

- Request for:
  - Robust hydrology assessments and evidence on contamination is required
  - Strong emphasis on multi-functional SuDS
  - Development to incorporate climate adaptation and meet emerging water efficiency policies.
  - Delivery of drainage and green infrastructure early, not retrospectively
  - Drainage, green/blue infrastructure, and public realm to be fully integrated from the outset
  - Long-term maintenance and management arrangements must be secured
  - Request that SUDS do not replace dedicated amenity green space.
  
- Widespread concern that:
  - Large parts of the area rely on septic tanks
  - There is no public foul sewer capacity
  - Flooding (including reservoir inundation zones)
  - Surface water issues due to impermeable ground
  - Contamination from historic landfill sites
  - Significant water storage requirements
  
- Repeated references to:
  - A £50m+ unfunded foul drainage requirement
  - Likely need for Foul Water Pumping Stations (FWPS) with 15m no-build zones, not shown on the masterplan
  
- Objections that the SPD incorrectly states there are “no utilities constraints”
  
- Further comments include:
  - Risk of surface water runoff
  - Risk of groundwater flooding
  - Reliance on SuDS without clear maintenance responsibility
  
- Requirement for only foul water to be connect to the public sewer.

- Request for the Infrastructure Phasing and Delivery Strategy to include:
  - foul and surface water drainage
  - potable water supply
  - phasing across all land ownerships
- Comments requesting that the FRAs should address climate change, exceedance flows, safe access/egress, and latest EA guidance.
- Comments requesting that SUDS Should control runoff to greenfield rates, manage 1 in 100-year events + climate change, follow drainage hierarchy, and include water quality treatment.
- Comments requesting that watercourses require buffers, minimal intervention and ecological improvements.
- Comments requesting that there are strengthened requirements for SUDS treatment stages and pollution prevention.
- Comments requesting key infrastructure (drainage/green space) must be delivered early.
- Comments requiring no increased risk between phases and secure long-term maintenance.
- Request for ongoing engagement with UUW and safeguarding of assets

#### **Council Response - Drainage, Flood Risk & Utilities**

- All of the site is within Flood Zone 1 – the lowest risk of fluvial flooding. The site was considered as part of a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment as part of PfE.
- All planning applications will need to be accompanied by a Flood Risk and Drainage Assessment and Strategy, in accordance with PfE Policy JP-S4. In terms of drainage, Chapter 7 of the Development Framework specifies that relevant planning applications will need to be

accompanied by a flood risk and drainage assessment and strategy which includes an approach to drain impermeable areas via an adoptable surface water drainage network, attenuated into strategic basins, controlled and discharged at greenfield discharge rates to existing watercourses.

- The drainage strategy will be required to maintain natural water flows incorporate SUDs and set out maintenance and management arrangements.
- The Council does not hold, and is not legally required to hold, a definitive register of all properties using private septic tanks or other non-mains. Likewise United Utilities has no responsibility for private septic tanks, cesspools or privately owned sewage treatment plants. As such this information was not reflected in the draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework.
- Details regarding the location of foul water pumping stations and associated easements will be agreed through the planning application process. Costs associated with infrastructure will be refined through the Infrastructure, Phasing and Delivery Strategy.
- The Council will continue to work with United Utilities and the Environment Agency to address flood risk and drainage issues.

#### **Proposed Amendment – Drainage, Flood Risk and Utilities**

- Section 3.2.6 of the SPD has been updated to reflect the fact that large parts of the area rely on septic tanks and there is no public foul sewer capacity.
- Section 3.2.6 has also been updated to identify an additional opportunity in relation to enhancing channel morphology, riparian habitat and floodplain connectivity where feasible.
- Section 7.6 Flood Risk and Drainage of the SPD has been amended to strengthen the wording in terms of ensuring a site wide flood and

drainage strategy for the site is prepared. This Strategy will be required to set out how SuDS are managed and maintained appropriately to ensure their proper functioning over the lifetime of the development.

- Section 7.6 Flood Risk and Drainage has been updated to state that detailed future designs for the development will take into account climate change allowances, surface water overland flow routes.
- Section 7.6 Flood Risk and Drainage has been updated to state that SUDs should:
  - Include water quality treatment stages, particularly where runoff originates from highways, parking areas or commercial land uses.
  - Avoiding direct discharge of untreated surface water to watercourses.
  - Requiring construction management plans to include robust pollution prevention measures.
- Section 7.6 Flood Risk and Drainage has been updated to state that where feasible a buffer should be maintained along ordinary watercourses, proportionate to topography and ecological value. Proposing crossings or diversions of watercourses are allowed and should be designed at the appropriate planning stage, and consulted with the Lead Local Flood Authority, including opportunities explored to enhance watercourse riparian habitat.
- Further text states Where feasible new SuDS should include water quality mitigation to limit pollutants from highways and parking areas into watercourses; and limit direct discharge of untreated water into watercourses. Opportunities should be explored to align biodiversity enhancements with flood risk management and climate adaptation objectives.
- Construction Management Plans should include pollution prevention measures.
- Additional references to on-going engagement with United Utilities have been added throughout the document.

### **Comments Received - Outdated Evidence Base**

- Calls for refreshed:
  - Traffic counts
  - Drainage modelling
  - Economic and viability assessments reflecting 2025–26 conditions

### **Council Response - Outdated Evidence Base**

- All planning applications will need to be accompanied by more up-to-date evidence and information around a number of factors, including updated information relating to transport and highways, ecology studies or drainage strategies for example. At this stage of the process, the evidence is proportionate to the fact that this is still a strategic plan that provides an indicative layout.
- Reference to the use of 2020 transport information relates to the wider Greater Manchester modelling that was done for the PfE plan at a strategic level. This was used as part of the evidence into the Places for Everyone Plan – which allocated the site for residential development. This strategic modelling was proportionate to the level of detail needed for the purposes of that stage in the planning process.

### **Proposed Amendment – Outdated Evidence Base**

- The SBDF has been updated in the introduction to the SBDF, introduction to Chapter 7 and sections 7.3, 7.4, 7.6 and 7.10 to strengthen the requirement for site-wide evidence to accompany planning applications.

### **Comments Received - Economic Viability & Deliverability**

- Respondents challenge the assumption that Atom Valley job growth justifies housing numbers:
  - Energy-intensive sectors made unviable by UK electricity prices (highest in G7, Feb 2026 CBI data)
  - No committed high-tech tenants

- Concerns that:
  - Only ~90 homes are forecast as deliverable by 2030
  - Development risks becoming piecemeal, unable to fund schools, roads, and drainage
- Repeated reference to Infrastructure Phasing & Delivery Strategy (IPDS) being deferred or “live”, lacking certainty or statutory weight.
- References to new housing market data (2026) which suggests:
  - Falling transaction volumes (~14–15% decline)
  - Slower housing demand and absorption rates
  - Risk to delivery timelines and infrastructure funding
  - Uncertainty around affordable housing (≈25%)
- Concern that:
  - The scheme may not be financially viable
  - Costs (infrastructure, remediation, drainage) are underestimated

### **Council Response - Economic Viability & Deliverability**

- The Simister Bowlee site will help address Greater Manchester’s acute housing and affordability challenge by delivering a diverse mix of homes supported by infrastructure. The site will also support the transformational economic potential of the wider Northern Gateway and Atom Valley by providing the homes and community infrastructure needed to support new job growth, including 20,000 jobs.
- The reference to 90 homes has been taken from the Council’s Five Year Supply Statement 2025 which provides an assessment of the amount of housing that is expected to be delivered on identified sites across the Borough over the next five years. This figure represents an indicative snapshot in time based on the information available at the point the assessment was undertaken. The figure is subject to change and does not form part of the Simister Bowlee Development Framework. The figure of 90 units is simply an indicative scenario in the absence of planning permission, detailed layouts, engineering analysis, or market-led scheme design.

- Given the size of the site, it will take several years for the site to be fully delivered and development is expected to come forward in a series of phases alongside necessary infrastructure provision. Planning applications within the site will be required to demonstrate how proposed development would assist in the delivery of key site-wide infrastructure. Planning applications which fail to deliver or contribute towards the wider strategy infrastructure requirements will be resisted.
- The Infrastructure Phasing and Delivery Strategy is intended to be a 'live document which is continuously reviewed and updated as detailed plans, evidence, infrastructure costs and the potential of funding becomes available.
- The site is required to meet the housing target set out in PfE. These targets are now below the Government's house building targets. The viability of all the allocations in the PfE Plan were assessed and have been tested through the PfE examination. This is a large site which will be delivered over a number of years and during that time there will be fluctuations in house price and construction costs.

#### **Proposed Amendment - Economic Viability & Deliverability**

- No amendments proposed in relation to these comments as they are not matters relevant to the content of the SBDF.

#### **Comments Received - Affordable Housing Policy**

- Concern that the SPD's 25% affordable housing figure is obsolete.
- Concern that the SBDF does not provide a 40% affordable housing requirement as per the NPPF December 2024 – para 157, ("Golden Rule" uplift).
- Concern that the affordable housing requirements combined with infrastructure costs, creates a "viability wipeout."

#### **Council Response – Affordable Housing Policy**



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- PfE Policy JPA1.2 requires the development to make provision for affordable housing in accordance with local planning policy requirements, which for Bury will require 25% affordable housing. For Rochdale this is currently 15% but will need to reflect the most up-to-date policy.
- The Simister Bowlee site was removed from the Green Belt on adoption of PfE in March 2024. This was prior to the publication of NPPF December 2024, and as a result paragraph 157 of NPPF and the “Golden Rule” uplift are not applicable to this site, as set out in footnote 58 of the NPPF.
- The viability of the allocation was tested as part of the Places for Everyone evidence, which concluded that the site would be viable including accounting for affordable housing and other costs.

### **Proposed Amendment - Affordable Housing Policy**

- No amendments proposed in relation to these comments as the issue of affordable housing is addressed in the SBDF through referenced to local plan policies.

### **Comments Received - Green Belt, Environment & Wildlife**

- Strong objections to:
  - Loss of open countryside and perceived Green Belt
  - Urban coalescence between Simister, Bowlee, Middleton and Prestwich
  - Wildlife concerns include impacts on UK Priority Species (lapwing, skylark, grey partridge, brown hare, deer, etc.).
  - Landscaping and SuDS are viewed as inadequate compensation for permanent loss.
- Many respondents cite the October 2025 High Court judgment and argue that compensatory Green Belt requirements remain unmet.

- Concern that there is a misuse of 'Grey Belt justification on active agricultural land
- Concern that the development will cause permanent spatial harm and not just visual impact.

Concern in relation to biodiversity:

- Loss of 74 hectares of Green Belt and habitats
- Impact on a Site of Biological Importance (SBI)
- Failure to guarantee statutory Biodiversity Net Gain

### **Council Response – Green Belt, Environment & Wildlife**

- The Simister Bowlee site has been subject to extensive consultation over a number of years through the statutory planning process (Places for Everyone Plan - PfE).
- This culminated in a comprehensive two-year Examination in Public, where independent Planning Inspectors considered all the evidence and representations made around the plan (including the objections on the site allocations). This examination considered any harm from the proposed development was out-weighed by the need for the development and the delivery of new homes.
- The legal outcome of that process removed the site from the Green Belt and it is now an established site for housing development. As such references to Grey Belt in this instance are not relevant to this site.
- Landscaping proposals and SuDS are not intended to compensate for the removal of the site from the greenbelt, these are requirements that developers must adhere to.
- To offset the impact of removing the site from the Green Belt there is a need to identify and deliver compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt in

the vicinity of the site. The full detail of Green Belt compensation would be proposed and agreed as part of future planning applications in accordance with PfE Policy JPA1.2 and JPA-G2 (Green Infrastructure Network).

- The SBI is acknowledged in the masterplan and as per existing policy guidance, any development will need to take full account of the SBI and the SBDF makes reference to 'retention and improvement of the SBI.
- Biodiversity Net Gain is a mandatory legal requirement in England under the Environment Act.

#### **Proposed Amendment - Green Belt, Environment & Wildlife**

- Section 7.4 (Ecology and Trees) has been strengthened to ensure a site wide detailed ecology strategy prepared in accordance with PfE Policies JP-G7 (Trees and Woodland) and Policy JP-G8 (A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity) is produced.

#### **Comments Received - Community Impact & Amenity**

- Concerns regarding:
  - Loss of rural character
  - Increased noise, pollution, and vibration
  - Decline in property values (some requesting compensation)
  - Pressure on schools, healthcare, and local services
- Significant concerns in terms of the consultation process, described as:
  - "Box-ticking"
  - Predetermined
  - Lacking transparency or meaningful engagement
- Concern re damage to existing residents property

## Council Response - Community Impact & Amenity

- The principle of residential development on the sites is not a debate that can be re-opened. In order to avoid misleading communication and to seek to address misunderstandings, officers had to stress during the consultation that the principle of housing on this site has already been established through PfE. This was often met with challenging discussions, but it was important that this fact was communicated.
- Whilst the principle of housing development on the site has been established through PfE, the purpose of the consultation was to try and establish views on the content of the Development Framework in terms of the infrastructure proposals and any local issues that residents wished to flag.
- The Councils have sought to provide a proportionate and accessible programme of engagement on the Development Framework within a defined statutory timeframe. Consultation has been undertaken in a structured and professional format and in accordance with relevant Regulations and its Statement of Community Involvement.
- With respect to liability and responsibility, the planning system contains clear mechanisms governing accountability. Developers remain responsible for designing and delivering infrastructure that complies with planning conditions, environmental regulations, building standards, and the requirements of statutory bodies such as the Lead Local Flood Authority and utility providers.
- The Council's role is to assess applications against adopted policy and material planning considerations. Responsibility for construction defects, implementation failures, or infrastructure performance issues would generally rest with the relevant developer, landowner, contractor, or infrastructure provider, depending on the specific circumstances.
- Whilst the concerns regarding property values are noted, the planning system in the UK does operate on the principle that decisions must be made in the public interest foremost, rather than the protection of the financial interests of individual property owners. The impact on the

market value of neighbouring properties is not considered a material planning consideration when determining a planning application.

### **Proposed Amendment - Community Impact & Amenity**

- Section 7.1 – Design - New paragraph in the development principle section on design which requires new development to ensure there will be no unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenity of the surrounding area particularly in terms of:
  - Overshadowing and loss of light;
  - Dominance and loss of privacy by virtue of separation distances, height, depth, mass, location of a building/extension and window positions;
  - Pollution and general disturbance arising from noise, vibration, smell, litter, artificial lights and opening hours;
  - Parking and servicing provision associated with the proposed development and its effects in terms of road safety, traffic generation and movement.

### **Comments Received – Health Facilities**

- The SBDF lacks a detailed assessment of existing healthcare capacity and the impact of the proposed development and potential mitigation measures.
- The Councils' must work closely with NHS GM ICB and partners to forecast healthcare needs and plan infrastructure and funding requirements
- Provision of healthcare should allow for:
  - financial contributions
  - on-site healthcare facilities
  - provision of land or buildings
  - or a combination of theseNew facilities may be required where existing services cannot expand

- Healthcare should be listed as a standalone infrastructure category in the “Key Infrastructure Requirements” table. The triggers should be based on health needs assessments with NHS input and financial contributions required where on-site provision is not feasible

### **Council Response - Health Facilities**

- The SBDF includes the requirement for an assessment to identify health infrastructure. The SBDF also includes provision for a local centre. This offers the potential to provide on-site health facilities/provision within the site itself. The delivery of any health infrastructure will be carried out in conjunction with relevant stakeholders and those responsible for the delivery of healthcare provision.

### **Proposed Amendment – Health Facilities**

- Chapter 8 (Phasing and Delivery) - Healthcare provision has been identified as a standalone infrastructure type and the associated comment is amended as follows: “Triggers to be determined through up-to-date health needs assessments, and the wider IPDS. Capacity assessments should be provided with NHS GM ICB. Should on-site provision be deemed unfeasible by NHS GM ICB, and a need has been evidenced, a financial contribution will be required to provide off-site additional healthcare provision”.

### **Comments Received - Procedural & Legal Concerns**

- Concern that the SPD fails NPPF soundness tests (justified, effective, consistent with national policy).
- Concern that the SBDF is based on outdated evidence.
- Concern that earlier studies identified high or very high harm and there is no clear explanation for departure from these findings.
- Concern that the SBDF is illegally flawed (Wednesbury unreasonableness), based on incomplete evidence at decision stage.

- Concern that there is a lack of transparency and public ability to assess proposals.
- Clarification as to whether the Councils' are receiving any capital receipts from JPA1.1.
- Calls for:
  - A comprehensive masterplan before any phasing
  - Binding equalisation mechanisms
  - Clear infrastructure funding commitments
  - Updated and independent assessments
  - Clear justification for conclusions

### **Council Response - Procedural & Legal Concerns**

- A lot of the comments relating to procedural and legal concerns relate to the principle of residential development on the site in PfE rather than the scope and content of the SBDF.
- A key part of the examination was for the Inspectors to assess whether PfE was prepared in accordance with legal and procedural requirements, and whether it was sound i.e. that it was positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy. They concluded that, subject to modifications, PfE was sound. The modifications were subsequently incorporated into the plan before being adopted with effect from 21 March 2024.
- The legal outcome of that process removed the sites from the Green Belt and they are now established sites for housing development. The principle of residential development on the site at Simister Bowlee is therefore not a debate that can be re-opened.
- The Councils take their statutory and procedural responsibilities in relation to public consultation very seriously. The current exercise concerns draft Development Frameworks that are being prepared under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town

and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The consultation has been undertaken in accordance with those Regulations and both Councils' adopted Statement of Community Involvement.

- Any planning applications that come forward on the site will need to be supported by detailed and up-to-date evidence in relation to a variety of matters, including ecology, flood risk and drainage, and air quality and pollution.
- The Council does not own land within the JPA1.1 allocation and therefore will not receive any capital receipts. There is no cross-subsidy between the two sites.
- The Simister Bowlee Development Framework provides a comprehensive masterplan for the site.
- The council can not require a binding equalisation mechanism through the statutory planning process.
- The Infrastructure Phasing and Delivery Strategy will be continuously reviewed and updated as plans, evidence, infrastructure costs and funding are confirmed.

#### **Proposed Amendment - Procedural & Legal Concerns**

- No amendments proposed in relation to these comments as they are not matters relevant to the content of the SBDF.

#### **Comments Received - Common Requests from Respondents**

- Pause or withdraw the SPD
- Update traffic, drainage, and economic evidence
- Provide a transparent viability assessment

- Clarify infrastructure funding and delivery
- Address cumulative impacts with JPA1.1
- Protect remaining green space and settlement separation
- Undertake meaningful re-consultation

### **Council Response – Common Requests from Respondents**

- The Simister Bowlee Development Framework does not introduce new planning policies. IT provides detailed guidance on PfE Policy JPA1.2 to ensure that the vision for the site is fulfilled throughout the lifetime of the development process and that development and infrastructure come forward in a planned and comprehensive manner. For this reason, the Council do not consider it necessary to pause or withdraw the SPD.
- The proposals set out in the Development Framework are still at a high level at this stage. More details of the development will emerge through subsequent planning applications and these will need to be supported by detailed and up-to-date evidence including traffic, drainage, economic and viability evidence.
- To support the delivery of infrastructure across the site, an Infrastructure, Phasing and Delivery Strategy for the site will be prepared in accordance with PfE Policy JPA1.2 and JP-D1. This is intended to be a live document that is continuously reviewed and updated.
- As set out above, transport assessments submitted with planning applications will need to consider all developments in the locality and model both the phased housing trips from JPA 1.2 with the projected HGV movements from JPA 1.1 (Northern Gateway).
- The vision for the site is to be landscape-led and a landscape strategy will be prepared and submitted as part of any planning applications. This will include the provision of a strong landscape edge to the North West boundary, adjacent to the Green Belt and land to the east. The

retention of key views and longer distance views will be enhanced and framed to maintain the connection of the site to the wider landscape.

- Whilst the SBDF will not be subject to further public consultation, all planning applications will be made public and available for comment.

#### **Comments Received - General**

- A glossary would help understanding some of the technical terms.
- Plans are not easy to understand

#### **Proposed Amendments – General**

- A glossary has been added
- Road numbers have been added to plans and diagrams to assist in readers orientating themselves
- Other specific changes relating to wording in the text and on plans to improve clarity and accuracy. For example more clarity on the provision of, and contributions to, school places.

# Appendix 1 – Sample of Strategic Sites Consultation Material

## Strategic Sites Consultation Poster



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# Have your say in our consultation on draft development frameworks for Elton Reservoir, Walshaw, and Simister/Bowlee

We are consulting on draft development frameworks for three strategic residential sites in Bury. Once adopted these will become Supplementary Planning Documents to guide decisions on future planning applications.

Each of these sites are allocated for residential development through the Places for Everyone joint plan and will be supported by new transport infrastructure, schools, green spaces, and new local centres.



## Elton Reservoir

**Up to 3,500 new homes**

A new community in a parkland setting in harmony with nature



## Walshaw

**Up to 1,250 new homes**

A well-connected community blending new development with existing neighbourhoods



## Simister/Bowlee

**Up to 1,550 new homes**

A sustainable community with a vital role in shaping the Northern Gateway



### Come to a drop-in event (4pm to 8pm)

#### Tuesday 24 February (all three sites)

- Radcliffe Market, 11 Blackburn Street M26 1PN

#### Wednesday 25 February (all three sites)

- Elton High School, Walshaw Road BL8 1RN

#### Thursday 26 February (all three sites)

- Parrenthorn High School, Heywood Road M25 2BW

#### Thursday 5 March (Simister/Bowlee only)

- Edgar Wood Academy, Heywood Old Road OL10 2QN

### More information and respond online from 13 February to 27 March 2026



[bury.gov.uk  
/strategicsites](https://www.bury.gov.uk/strategicsites)

Alternatively, email [strategicsites@bury.gov.uk](mailto:strategicsites@bury.gov.uk) or post feedback to Strategic Planning & Infrastructure, Floor 2, 3 Knowsley Place, Duke Street, Bury BL9 0EJ

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# Strategic Sites Consultation Leaflet

## Have your say in our consultation

on draft development frameworks for Elton Reservoir, Walshaw, and Simister/Bowlee



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Each of these sites are allocated for residential development through the Places for Everyone joint plan and will be supported by new transport infrastructure, schools, green spaces, and new local centres.

See over the page for more information



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More information and respond online from 13 February to 27 March 2026



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**Citizen Space Consultation Platform**



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**Simister Bowlee draft Development Framework (Northern Gateway 1.2)**

**Overview**

Bury and Rochdale Councils have launched a joint consultation on a draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework (SBDF), which once adopted will become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

Northern Gateway is made up of two allocated development sites in the Places for Everyone (PFE) joint development plan, both of which straddle the border between Bury Council and Rochdale Council. The SBDF relates to the land south of the M62 around Simister and Bowlee, known as JP Allocation 1.2: Simister / Bowlee in PFE.

For more information please visit:

- Rochdale: <https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/NorthernGateway>
- Bury: [www.bury.gov.uk/strategic-sites](http://www.bury.gov.uk/strategic-sites)

We are consulting and want to know your thoughts on the Simister Bowlee Development Framework available to read in the related documents section at the bottom of this page.

Rochdale Strategic Planning Privacy Notice can be found here: [Strategic Planning Privacy Notice | Rochdale Borough Council](#)

**Why your views matter**

**Have your say and take part in the consultation**

There are a number of ways you can provide your feedback:

- Survey: click 'Have your say' below.
- Drop-in event: events are listed below are being held in Bury and Rochdale.
- Email Rochdale: [strategic\\_planning@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:strategic_planning@rochdale.gov.uk)
- Email Bury: [strategic-sites@bury.gov.uk](mailto:strategic-sites@bury.gov.uk)
- Post Rochdale: Strategic Planning, Rochdale Borough Council, Floor 3, Number One Riverside, Smith Street, Rochdale, OL16 1XU.
- Post Bury: Strategic Planning and Infrastructure, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, 3 Knowsley Place, Duke Street, Bury

Closed 27 Mar 2026  
Opened 13 Feb 2026

**Contact**  
Strategic Planning Rochdale Borough Council Floor 3,  
Number One Riverside Smith Street Rochdale, OL16 1XU  
[strategic-sites@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:strategic-sites@rochdale.gov.uk)

**Events**

- Drop in - Radcliffe Market**  
From 24 Feb 2026 at 16:00 to 24 Feb 2026 at 20:00  
11 Blackburn St, Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1PN [Add to my Calendar / List](#)
- Drop in - Elton High School**  
From 25 Feb 2026 at 16:00 to 25 Feb 2026 at 20:00  
Widdow Rd, Bury BL8 1RN [Add to my Calendar / List](#)
- Drop in - Parrenthom High School**  
From 26 Feb 2026 at 16:00 to 26 Feb 2026 at 20:00  
Heywood Rd, Prestwich, Whitefield, Manchester M25 2BW [Add to my Calendar / List](#)
- Drop in - Edgar Wood Academy**  
From 5 Mar 2026 at 16:00 to 5 Mar 2026 at 18:00  
Heywood Old Rd, Middleton, Heywood OL10 2QN [Add to my Calendar / List](#)

**Related**

[Consultation on Simister Bowlee Development Framework Supplementary Planning Document](#)  
8.4 MB (PDF document)

Arisee  
All Arisee



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## Strategic Sites Consultation Letters

Dear Consultee

RE: CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT SIMISTER BOWLEE  
DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

We are contacting you as you have previously expressed an interest in local planning matters and your details are included on our consultation database.

Following its adoption on 21st March 2024, the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) became a key part of Rochdale's statutory development plan and this includes proposals for a residential-led development within the JPA1.2 allocation at Simister / Bowlee.

Rochdale Council has jointly prepared a draft Simister Bowlee Development Framework (SBDF) for this allocation with Bury Council. Once adopted, the SBDF will become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The draft framework provides more detail on the vision and aspirations for this strategic allocation. It establishes key principles for the development of the site and shows how it is likely to be developed through a high-level masterplan. The framework also sets out how new housing and supporting infrastructure will be provided in a coordinated and phased approach.

Following Cabinet approval, we are now seeking your views on the draft Development Framework over a six-week period of consultation commencing on Friday 13 February 2026, running until Friday 27 March 2026.

HOW CAN I VIEW THE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AND MAKE COMMENTS?

All relevant documentation can be found on the Council's web site at <https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/NorthernGateway>

The document will also be available to view electronically at all local libraries during their normal working hours (see [www.rochdale.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/libraries) for details). In addition, paper copies of the draft SBDF will be put in the four main borough libraries – Heywood, Littleborough, Middleton and Rochdale.

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We are keen to promote the submission of comments electronically using the consultation portal that can be accessed via the Council's web site or by email. Responses by email should be sent to [strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk) . Alternatively, responses can be returned by post to the following address:

Strategic Planning  
Rochdale Borough Council  
Floor 3, Number One Riverside  
Smith Street  
Rochdale, OL16 1XU.

Please ensure that all comments reach us by the 27 March 2026.

### DROP IN SESSIONS

Rochdale Council is hosting a drop in event where Planning Officers will be available to answer any questions you may have on the draft SBDF as follows:

1. Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March – Edgar Wood Academy, Heywood Old Road  
OL10 2QN – 4-8pm

Bury Council is also hosting drop in events for the draft SBDF and other draft development frameworks that they have produced for strategic allocations in Bury. These are as follows:

1. Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February – Radcliffe Market ,11 Blackburn Street M26  
1PN – 4-8pm
2. Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February – Elton High School, Walshaw Road BL8  
1RN – 4-8pm
3. Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February – Parrenthorn High School, Heywood Road  
M25 2BW – 4-8pm



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Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Strategic Planning Team on 01706 924252 or email [strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.planning@rochdale.gov.uk) if you require further information on the draft NGDF.

Yours faithfully

Melanie Hale  
Head of Planning

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## **Bury Consultee Letter**

12<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Dear Consultee,

**RE: CONSULTATION ON DRAFT ELTON RESERVOIR, WALSHAW AND SIMISTER BOWLEE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS**

We are contacting you as you have previously expressed an interest in local planning matters and your details are included on our consultation database.

Following its adoption on 21st March 2024, the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) became a key part of Bury's statutory development plan and this includes proposals for residential-led development within the Elton Reservoir, Walshaw and Simister Bowlee strategic allocations.

Bury Council has prepared draft Development Frameworks for the Elton Reservoir and Walshaw sites and jointly prepared a draft Development Framework for Simister Bowlee with Rochdale Council. Once adopted, each of the Development Frameworks will become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The draft frameworks provide more detail on the vision and aspirations for the strategic allocations. They establish key principles for the development of the sites and shows how they are likely to be developed through a high-level masterplan. The frameworks also set out how new housing and supporting infrastructure will be provided in a coordinated and phased approach.

Following Cabinet approval, we are now seeking your views on the draft Development Frameworks over a six-week period of consultation commencing on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2026, running until Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2026.

**HOW CAN I VIEW THE DRAFT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORKS AND MAKE COMMENTS?**

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All relevant documentation can be found on the Council's web site at [www.bury.gov.uk/strategicsites](http://www.bury.gov.uk/strategicsites)

The Development Frameworks will also be available to view at Bury Town Hall between the hours of 8.45am and 5.00pm (Monday-Friday) and at local libraries and the Tottington Centre during their normal opening hours (see [www.bury.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.bury.gov.uk/libraries) and [www.tottingtoncentre.co.uk](http://www.tottingtoncentre.co.uk) for details).

We are keen to promote the submission of comments electronically via the Council's web site or by email. Responses by email should be sent to [strategicsites@bury.gov.uk](mailto:strategicsites@bury.gov.uk). Alternatively, responses can be returned by post to the following address:

Strategic Planning and Infrastructure  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
3 Knowsley Place  
Duke Street  
Bury

#### DROP IN SESSIONS

Bury Council is hosting drop in events where Planning Officers will be available to answer any questions you may have on the draft Development Frameworks as follows:

- Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> February – Radcliffe Market ,11 Blackburn Street M26 1PN – 4-8pm
  - Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> February – Elton High School, Walshaw Road BL8 1RN – 4-8pm
  - Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February – Parrenthorn High School, Heywood Road M25 2BW – 4-8pm
- Rochdale Council is also hosting a drop in event on:
- Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March – Edgar Wood Academy, Heywood Old Road OL10 2QN – 4-8pm (Simister Bowlee only)

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Please do not hesitate to contact a member of the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure team on 0161 253 5550 or email [strategicsites@bury.gov.uk](mailto:strategicsites@bury.gov.uk) if you require further information on the draft Development Frameworks

Yours sincerely,  
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure

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## Example Social Media Posts



 **Bury Council**  
Mar 23, 16:18

Residents have until Friday (27 Mar) to comment on draft development frameworks for Elton Reservoir, Walshaw and Simister/Bowlee. The outline plans concern new homes, schools, transport and roads, a Metrolink stop, enhanced public transport

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