

Lower Falinge Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

Draft February 2021



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Summary

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This document requires the following approvals.

Name	Title	Date of Issue	Version Number
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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The regeneration of Lower Falinge represents a strategic priority for the Council to contribute to the delivery of new and improved housing offer in the area and capitalise on the development and regeneration within Rochdale Town Centre.

Redevelopment and investment in Lower Falinge's is an important part of this vision – delivering better homes for our residents to live in alongside improved working and leisure opportunities in the town centre.

The need for investment in Lower Falinge has been identified in partnership with Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) who have prepared a masterplan for this area and College Bank.

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been prepared to establish an appropriate framework to guide and deliver development by setting out the development, design and accessibility principles, and the identification of focus areas where more specific guidance is necessary relating to Lower Falinge specifically.

1.2 The Vision

Future investment in Lower Falinge will build on the strengths of the existing neighbourhood and enhance it through improvements to the housing offer including both tenure and type, alongside delivery of supporting green infrastructure, public realm, highways upgrades and associated infrastructure as required to support housing delivery. This will be to the benefit of the current community and future residents, the wider surroundings, and will support the regeneration of Rochdale Town Centre.

The vision for Lower Falinge includes the delivery of:

- a better quality and mix of housing choice to meet the needs of the community now and in the future;
- a safe neighbourhood where attractive, energy efficient homes combine with well-proportioned streets, open spaces and landscaping to create distinctive and sustainable high density design including new residential development along with the opportunity for some complimentary non-residential uses, such as community facilities;
- an accessible neighbourhood with pedestrian and cycle friendly links and routes within and across the area and strong connections with the wider surrounding areas including Rochdale Town Centre;
- high quality public and green spaces which enhance the existing outdoor environment and recreational activities for people of all ages; and
- a neighbourhood which manages the public spaces and creates opportunities for social interaction and activities.

1.3 Purpose and status of the SPD

The purpose of this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to provide a framework for delivery of development and investment across Lower Falinge. It outlines potential development opportunities within the area including appropriate development mix and scale that will be supported across the neighbourhood.

The SPD enshrines and elaborates upon policies within the Rochdale Core Strategy (2016), notably policy C2 – Focusing on regeneration areas and economic growth corridors/areas, specifically part 7. 'Falinge,

Spotland and Sparth, Rochdale, where we will improve the residential environment including new high quality housing where opportunities occur’.

The SPD will be used by the Council as a material consideration when determining future planning applications. Specifically, it:

- sets out a development vision for the area;
- provides greater certainty on the uses, form and quality of acceptable development including approach to hard and soft (including green) public realm delivery ;
- assists the Council in the assessment of planning applications; and
- provides a basis for future decision on assembling land to provide certainty, including the potential use of Compulsory Purchase Orders where necessary and appropriate.

1.4 Relationship between SPD and College Bank and Lower Falinge Spatial Strategy Masterplan and Other Supporting Evidence

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) commissioned Levitt Bernstein and GVA (now Avison Young) in early 2017 to prepare a spatial strategy for the College Bank and Lower Falinge neighbourhoods and adjacent areas and identify possible options for investment in College Bank and Lower Falinge, to improve the quality and mix of homes, creating places where people want to come and live, and maximising the opportunities created from the regeneration of Rochdale Town Centre through better access to retail, leisure, transport and jobs.

As majority landowners across College Bank and Lower Falinge, RBH required a masterplan to inform future investment across the neighbourhoods.

The Masterplan was developed including a programme of significant consultation with the local community and local partners. It identified a range of interventions required to address issues identified. This included recommendations in relation to the need to diversify the mix (type and tenure) and quality of homes available alongside wider interventions.

These wider interventions included critically the need for comprehensive supporting investment in the physical appearance of the area including quality and design of the public spaces, better access and connectivity within the area and to the Town Centre and surrounding areas, and a safer and mixed neighbourhood offering a range of community and shopping facilities as amenity to support residents and their quality of life.

The masterplan concluded the critical need for the delivery of this programme of investment to support and facilitate wider regeneration and contribute positively to housing market improvement across the town centre.

To complement and help inform the work instructed by RBH, AECOM were commissioned by Rochdale Council to undertake a study to review pedestrian accessibility between the Lower Falinge and College Bank area and Rochdale Town Centre, the Educational Quarter and Rochdale Infirmary to the North. The study identified a number of issues and opportunities relating to movement between the areas. It investigated potential solutions to improve pedestrian connections. Opportunities for intervention were established and presented as a number of projects ranging from improved signage, junction improvements, pedestrianisation and green routes to traffic management.

It should be noted that although this SPD seeks to build on the College Bank and Lower Falinge Spatial Strategy Masterplan it only covers the Lower Falinge area as the initial phase of delivery emerging. This is reflected in the SPD boundary plan shown in Figure 1 of this document. It should be noted that this boundary extends beyond the RBH masterplan boundary to reflect potential future areas of change outside of RBH control.

Technical evidence

In preparing this SPD:

1. Levitt Bernstein provided technical support on design and townscape illustrations. More information on the design approach that informed the SPD is provided in the design principles section which can be found in Chapter 4
2. Aecom provided support on the accessibility and movement strategy. More information on the accessibility approach that informed the SPD is provided within the Transport section can be found in Chapter 6
3. GVA (now Avison Young) provided technical support in terms of viability and delivery strategy underpinning the College Bank and Lower Falinge masterplan. More information on phasing and delivery can be found in Chapter 8.

2. Background

2.1 Policy Context

The document is designed to supplement Rochdale Core Strategy (2016) **Policy C2 – Focusing on regeneration areas and economic growth corridors/areas**. However, it should be read in conjunction with all national and local planning policy and guidance documents including those outlined below, and any other relevant documents which may emerge during the lifetime of this document as material considerations.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The Framework sets out national planning policy, providing strategic direction on a wide range of planning matters. It is supplemented by Planning Practice Guidance which gives further guidance on how policy should be interpreted.

At the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This presumption should be reflected in the plan-making process and any associated guidance. The Framework states that development should be approved unless any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of that development.

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment and that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that development responds to local character and history, reflecting the identity of local surroundings and materials; however, authorities should not prevent or discourage appropriate innovation. NPPF promotes a good standard of amenity for existing and future occupants of land and buildings.

The SPD has been positively prepared. It seeks to regenerate and attract investment into the area and wider Rochdale Town Centre, taking forward identified opportunities to meet the housing needs and aspirations of the Lower Falinge community both now and in the future.

2.3 Core Strategy (2016)

Rochdale Core Strategy (2016) is the key element of the development plan for Rochdale and will be used in determining planning applications for sites within the Lower Falinge.

Key policy implications are set out in relation to each site identified in this SPD (Section 7) but it will be important to consider all the relevant policies of the Core Strategy when preparing site-specific proposals.

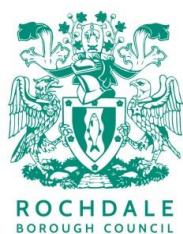
The Core Strategy identifies the Falinge as a growth area. Policy C2 specifically relates to the Falinge, Spotland and Sparth regeneration area as a regeneration area. It sets out key development principles and proposes the following:

- focus regeneration and the delivery of new homes; and
- improve the residential environment including new high quality housing where opportunities occur.

2.4 Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

When considering any type of development, relevant SPDs at the time of publication of this document include:

- The Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs);



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- Affordable Housing SPD;
- Climate Change and Adaptation SPD;
- Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing SPD; and
- Biodiversity and Development SPD.

All SPDs are available to view on the Council's website.

3. Context

3.1 Description of the Site

Lower Falinge is located adjacent to Rochdale Town Centre and comprise of approximately 400 homes, primarily owned and managed by Rochdale Borough Housing (RBH), a mutual housing society. The original housing offer consisted of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom flats solely. Since 2015, RBH has delivered a number of new family houses and bungalows, with more new homes under construction.

The SPD area captures a range of land uses beyond residential accommodation – this includes areas of hard standing, car parking, low grade industrial activities (predominantly north of St Marys Gate), retail uses including Dunelm Mill and Lidl, an RSPCA centre and areas of informal and formal landscaping of varying quality.

There is a cluster of non-residential units running along Spotland Road which includes a mix of independent shops, employment uses, restaurants and takeaways.

Through the RBH masterplanning, Lower Falinge has been recognised as needing significant investment in order to provide existing and future residents with a better quality home, more housing choice and a better quality of life and wellbeing.

Overall, there is a low level of satisfaction living in the homes within Lower Falinge by residents and few people want to move into or remain within the area. There are a significant number of long term empty homes in the Lower Falinge neighbourhood and homes used as short term temporary accommodation.

In addition, Lower Falinge is identified to be physically disconnected from the town centre and surrounding areas.

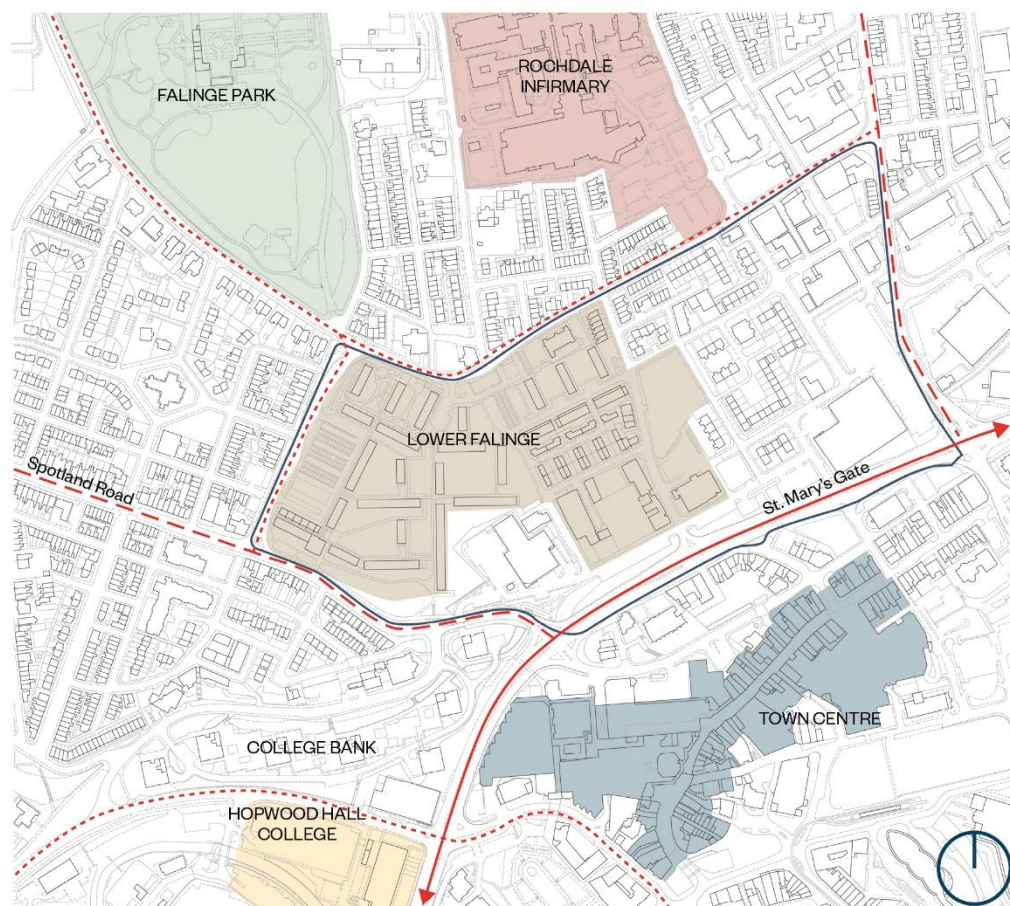
Whilst the area has been impacted historically by damaging media coverage, more recently investment by Homes England and RBH has delivered new affordable homes of a high quality design to improve the existing offer in the area, as the first phase of delivery under the College Bank and Lower Falinge Spatial Strategy Masterplan.





3.2 SPD Boundary

The area covered by this SPD is broadly contained between Whitworth Road to the east, St. Mary's Gate to the south, Spotland Road and Sheriff Street to the west and Falinge Road and Howard Street to the north (See Figure 1).

It comprises approximately 17 hectares of land and a significant part of the area consists of RBH owned social housing and retail premises, plus a number of additional commercial and industrial premises of varying nature and quality.

Figure 1 SPD boundary



	Primary Route		SPD Boundary		Primary Shopping Area
	Principle Road		Falinge Park		Rochdale Infirmary
	Classified Route		Hopwood Hall College		Lower Falinge Masterplan Area

3.3 Relationship with Adjoining Areas

To the immediate south of Lower Falinge over St Marys Gate is **Rochdale Town Centre** which is predominantly retail with a number of businesses, and meets the Boroughs retail needs. It includes Rochdale Exchange Shopping Centre which contains the main shopping area of Yorkshire Street and is designated as a Primary Shopping Area. The Town Centre is the subject of a comprehensive and exciting regeneration programme which will include diversification to include housing delivery in the future. Development within the SPD area needs to enhance, complement and support the Town Centre ambitions. As a minimum it should ensure housing market failure is addressed and deliver excellent pedestrian and visual linkages between the two areas to create a fully integrated town centre.. The Town Centre currently captures a range of non-residential uses including the Rochdale Exchange Shopping Centre.

The area north of the SPD area forms an important link between the wider residential area and primary care service at **Rochdale Infirmary**, which supports health and social care delivery across the Borough which it serves. A key opportunity for the SPD is to improve links to Rochdale Infirmary ensuring it is well related to and easily accessible across the site and to and from the town centre.

South of the SPD area is **Rochdale Town Centre**,

The **College and Sixth Form College** is located to the south of College Bank. The links between the SPD area and the College need to be enhanced to seek to ensure accessibility and the ongoing success of the College as a community asset.

Falinge Park to the north of the SPD area is a Victorian Park, close to Rochdale Town Centre. Its main features include the façade of Falinge Hall and the Mawson designed formal gardens, which are complemented by the restored bandstand. There are facilities for all ages, from the great play facilities to the bowling greens. This area is an important link to Lower Falinge and pedestrian routes should be enhanced. Any development must complement and enhance these unique assets.

4. Development Principles

The SPD establishes the principles and parameters to guide future development for the next 10-15 years and beyond within Lower Falinge. Through delivery of the SPD we will ensure a thriving, vibrant and sustainable community in Lower Falinge.

In order to achieve this, the SPD will seek to efficiently use land, provide a better quality and variety of housing by type and tenure, good and environmentally sensitive design, improvement to public open space and public realm and access to employment and job opportunities, community facilities and local services. The SPD places strong emphasis on the following:

4.1 Connectivity and Movement

Lower Falinge is well located in close proximity to Rochdale Town Centre; however, its connectivity to the Town Centre and wider infrastructure such as parks, green spaces, surrounding neighbourhoods and local facilities is poor. These connections should be enhanced. Central to achieving this will be improving crossing points along St. Mary's Gate into the Town Centre, improving key junctions such as Sheriff Street and Falinge Road, Sheriff Street and Spotland Road; and creating green links to Falinge Park to the north, Primrose Street Recreation Ground to the west and Rochdale Memorial Gardens to the south.

St. Mary's Gate acts as a major physical barrier between Lower Falinge and the Town Centre, with large volumes of traffic and poor crossing points making access over the road difficult. Strategies relating to the improvement of St. Mary's Gate will be considered in parallel to future development proposals in Lower Falinge by Rochdale Borough Council.

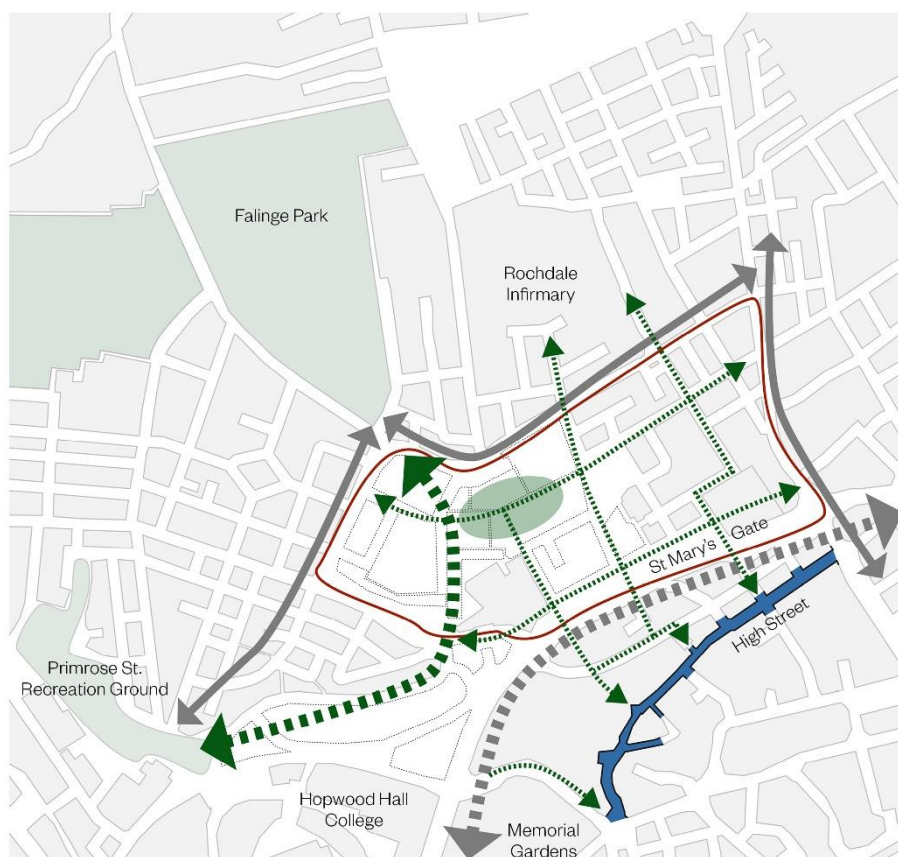
Figure 2 Connectivity and Movement Development Principle



4.2 Streets and Public Realm

Safer streets should be designed, with improved crossings, wider pavements, cycle provision and traffic calming measures in place where appropriate. This will help to improve pedestrian and cyclist movement within the neighbourhoods and surrounding area. Streets should have residential or non-residential uses fronting on to them in order to activate the streets and improve safety for the street user. High quality public realm interventions should be considered and used where possible, for example shared surfaces, public squares, street trees, green buffers to busy roads, improved footpaths, seating and clear areas of defensible space or private front gardens.

Figure 3 Streets and Public Realm Development Principle



4.3 Public open space and play provision

New development should maintain and enhance existing open space provision, and, where possible, create new inclusive spaces for leisure, recreation and play for a variety of age and social groups. Landscape proposals should be integrated within the spatial strategy where appropriate and help to tie in and connect the streets, public realm, homes and facilities.

Figure 4 Public Open Space and Play Provision Development Principle



4.4 Non-residential uses and new facilities

There is scope to incorporate a variety of non-residential facilities into new development such as small scale convenience retail units which complement the existing offer in the Town Centre, strengthen key

frontages including St Mary's Gate and provide important service function for residents, or other facilities such as community spaces, small local businesses or educational uses.

Figure 5 Non-Residential Uses and New Facilities Development Principle



4.5 New and improved homes

Where existing homes are retained, redevelopment should encourage repairs to these buildings to improve the quality of the homes and the type of public and open spaces. In the case of new homes being proposed, a suitable mix of tenures, sizes and types should be developed in order to meet local needs over the long term and create a sustainable community.

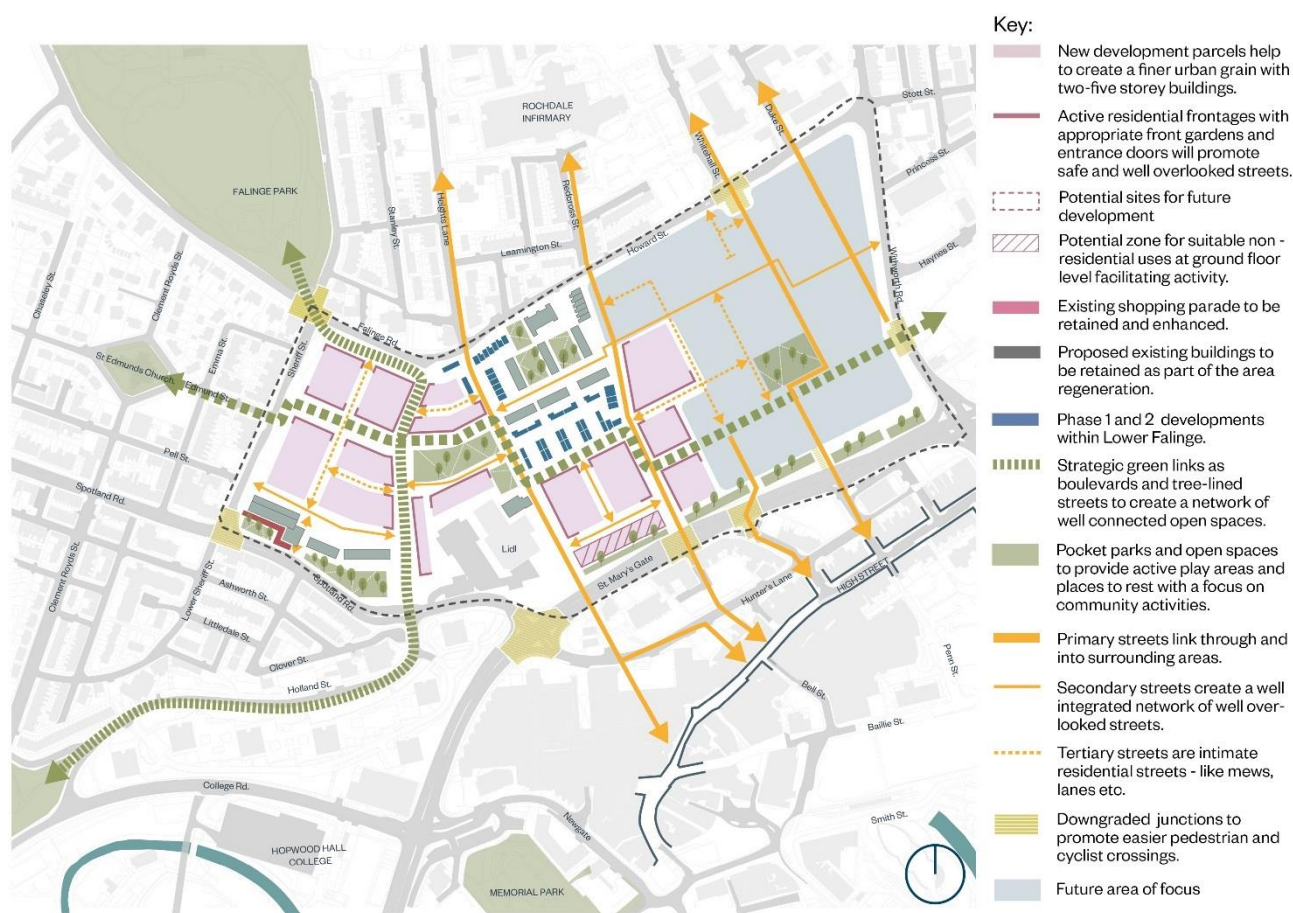
Figure 6 New and Improved Homes Development Principle



5. Design Principles

It is one of the main aims of this SPD to address the key issues faced within Lower Falinge and ensure that new development is of the highest possible quality. This section sets out key principles for urban design and public realm for future development proposals across the Lower Falinge neighbourhood.

Figure 7 SPD Framework Plan



Access and Movement Strategy

An inclusive and legible movement network should be delivered through a well-defined hierarchy of streets, safe pedestrian and cycle routes across Lower Falinge.

The access and movement strategy aims to create an interconnected network of streets and public spaces, integrating Lower Falinge better with surrounding areas.

It seeks to arrange and align routes first and foremost for ease of walking and cycling and create a strong connection with surrounded areas (specially the town centre).

Figure 8 Access and Movement Strategy



The SPD requires:

1. Creation of a traffic calmed green route attractive to pedestrians and cyclists through Lower Falinge that connects Falinge Park and to other areas of open space to the south west.
2. Creation of strong pedestrian and cycle links through Lower Falinge that connect to the Town Centre, Lidl supermarket, a new proposed green space and Falinge Park, seeking to reinstate the lost link between Toad Lane and the Town Centre.

3. Provision of a pedestrian and cycle connection linking Spotland Road, College Bank, ASDA, Hopwood Hall College, Broadfield Park, Exchange Shopping Centre and Rochdale Interchange.
4. Creation of an easily navigable connection between the Town Centre and Rochdale Infirmary.
5. Downgrade of Sheriff Street.
6. Creation of legible east to west routes to allow easy movement between residential areas to the west and the retail park directly to the east of Lower Falinge.
7. Introduction of strong frontage onto St Mary's Gate to activate this busy route. A tree lined green buffer along the busy route could provide wider pavements for cyclists and pedestrians.
8. Delivery of safe and easy to use pedestrian crossing points across St. Mary's Gate.

Streets and Public Realm Strategy

The SPD aims to create attractive streets and spaces that encourage more people to use them often and for a long time, and reduce the emphasis placed on the use and accommodation of motor vehicles.

The SPD prioritises the safety and ease of use for pedestrians and users of all abilities to move about and recognises the role that different streets and green areas have to the creation of this quality and accessible environment.

This will promote more sustainable and healthier lifestyles and make the area a vibrant and welcoming place.

Figure 9 Streets and Public Realm Strategy



The SPD requires:

1. Streets designed to improve safety and the feeling of security in the neighbourhoods.
2. Streets that are designed to improve accessibility for pedestrians and non-vehicular users of all ages and abilities.
3. Creation of a welcoming and outward looking sense of place.

4. Delivery of a series of connected public spaces and well overlooked streets that form part of the public realm network and enhance the sense of place and sense of community.
5. Creation of safe environments through the careful design of buildings to allow for natural surveillance and eyes on the street.
6. Safer and more attractive streets that better connect Lower Falinge to the Town Centre and adjoining communities and facilities designed to not only minimise opportunities for crime but also promote a greater pedestrian and cycling culture which will promote healthier lifestyles.
7. A pedestrian and cycle focussed public realm that should strengthen the existing street grid in order to make movement within and through the area simple and enjoyable.
8. Incorporation of focal points for the local community and social activities within the street grid.
9. Carefully planned car parking provision to avoid large areas of parking along streets and sterilised spaces in this highly sustainable location.

Open Spaces and Play Strategy

The SPD aspires to a high quality, accessible network of clean, safe and attractive open spaces across Lower Falinge that will allow people to improve their health and well-being through recreation and sport. This should include a well-balanced provision of high quality multi-functional open space that is easily accessible and sustainably managed which encourages a sense of belonging and enhances the quality of life of residents.

Figure 10 Open Spaces and Play Strategy



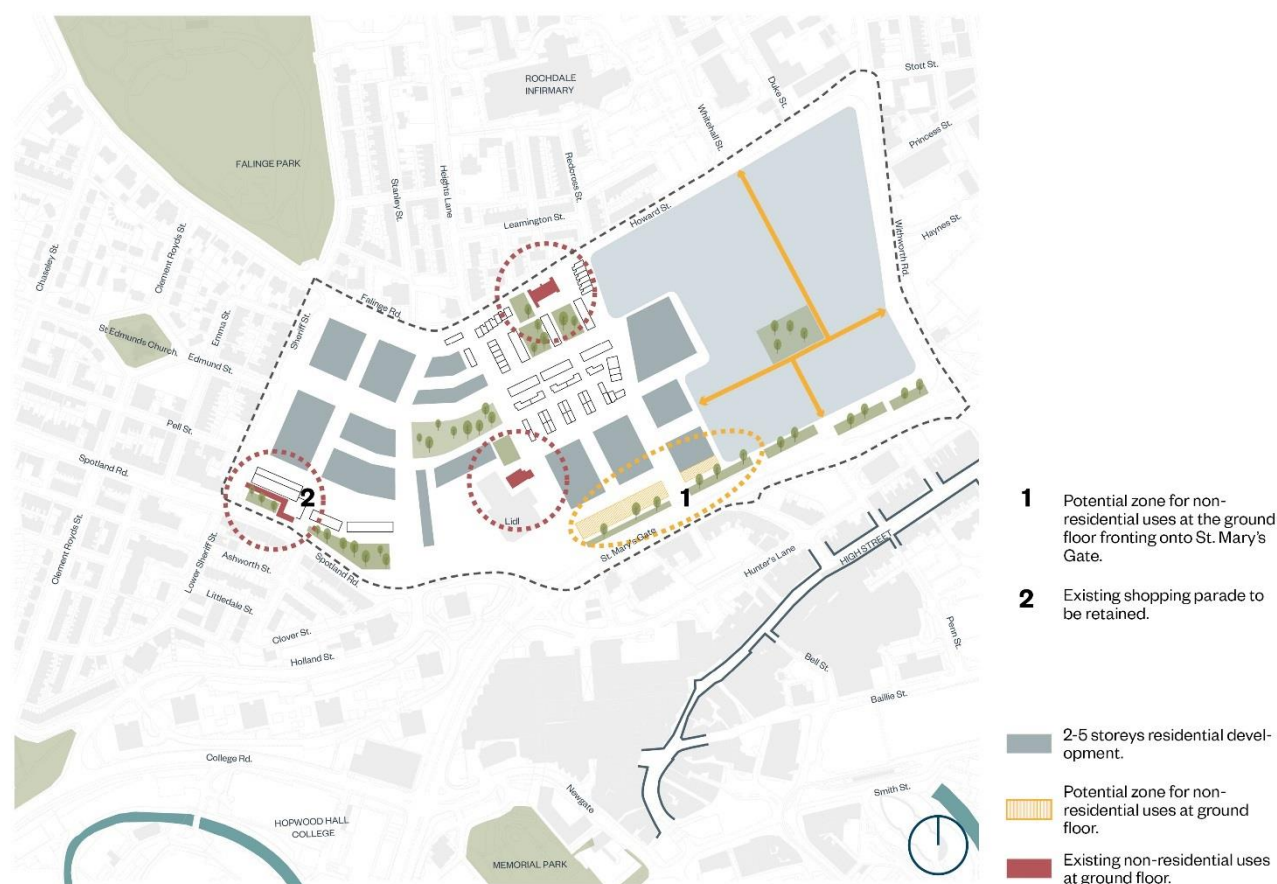
The SPD requires:

1. Improved public and green spaces that enhance the existing outdoor environment and create an inviting, safe and healthy environment for all.
2. Opportunities for local residents to take ownership of and be involved in the management of areas of public space where it is appropriate and sustainable in the long term.
3. Creation of spaces to provide a range of recreational activities for people of all ages and particularly for young people.
4. Delivery of play facilities that are safe, attractive and useful to a range of different user groups including variety of age and abilities and encourage inter-generational activity.
5. All open spaces to be safe, be well overlooked and be easily accessible.

Land Use Strategy

The SPD land use strategy seeks to ensure a sustainable housing market which can support Rochdale Town Centre's regeneration, with a focus on housing delivery alongside convenience retailing to support the day to day needs of residents.

Figure 11 Land Use Strategy



The SPD requires:

1. Delivery of a sustainable residential housing market across the Lower Falinge area.
2. A mix of uses including community uses (public and private sector), convenience retail, childcare facilities, and/or educational- training facilities which could be provided at key activity hubs and gateways along St Mary's Gate to support and enhance the residential community here and in neighbouring areas.
3. The enhancement of the existing shopping parade at junction of Sheriff Street and Spotland Road to better serve a growing residential community.

The SPD building heights strategy respects its wider context and has regard to the local housing market and housing need in advocating a generally low-medium rise area that shifts in scale and building typology to key frontages. The average height across Lower Falinge will be 2-4 storeys and up to 3-4 storeys on the development edges. Some marker buildings will be located as landmarks on the urban landscape. Higher density will be supported where it does not undermine meeting housing need within the area.

Key views to moments.

2-4 Storeys.

3-5 Storeys.

Potential higher buildings along St. Mary's Gate

Architectural moments and landmark corners.

1. Refurbished homes and new homes in Lower Falinge to improve the range and quality of homes on offer.
2. A suitable mix of tenures, sizes and types should be developed to meet local needs and create a sustainable community, specifically addressing current exposure to mono-type (flats) and mono-tenure (social rented) opportunities.
3. Zones indicating 2-4 storey development should primarily comprise of 2- 3 storey town house development with strategic locations for 4 storey corner blocks which could be flatted accommodation.
4. Zones indicating 3-4 storey development should primarily comprise of 3-4 storey development with strategic locations for additional height, including areas where there is underlying landform and low topography, or architectural moments at landmark corners - these zones could be flatted blocks or mixed-use development with ground floor areas allocated to non-residential uses.

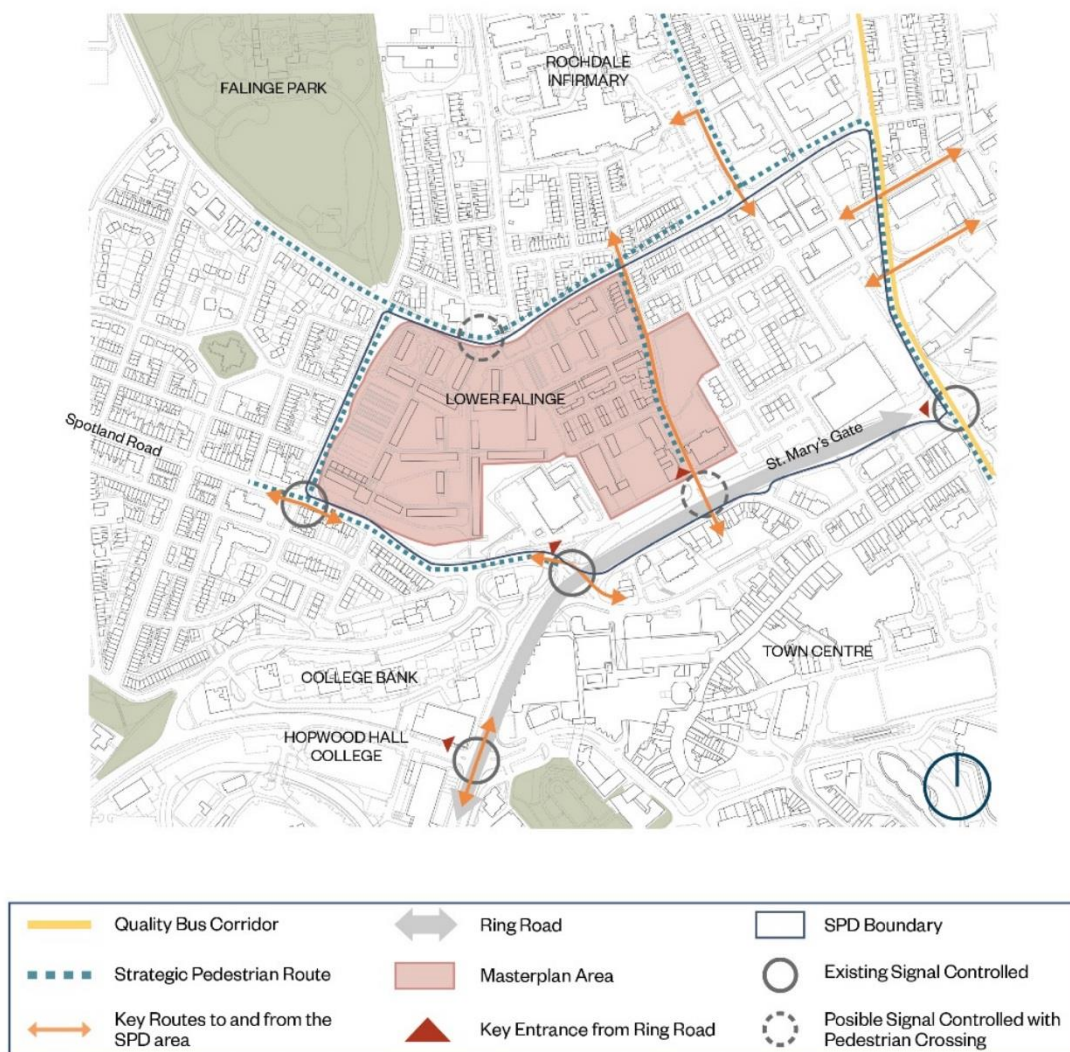
6. Transport and Access

This section contains a summary of the main transport issues affecting the SPD area. This includes identification of particular issues that will need to be taken into account when considering future development across Lower Falinge.

Figure 13 provides a context for current movement to and through the area, including key barriers to movement (a description of the barriers is set out in Appendix 2).

The overall objective of the movement strategy for the SPD as set out in Section 4 above is to enable pedestrians, people with impaired mobility and cyclists to have better connectivity within and adjoining the surrounding area including Rochdale Town Centre. Across the SPD area, there is a lack of facilities for pedestrians and priority is given to motorised traffic. This reduces choice and channels pedestrians to crossing locations that may be less than conveniently located for their particular journey.

Figure 13 Current Movement Context



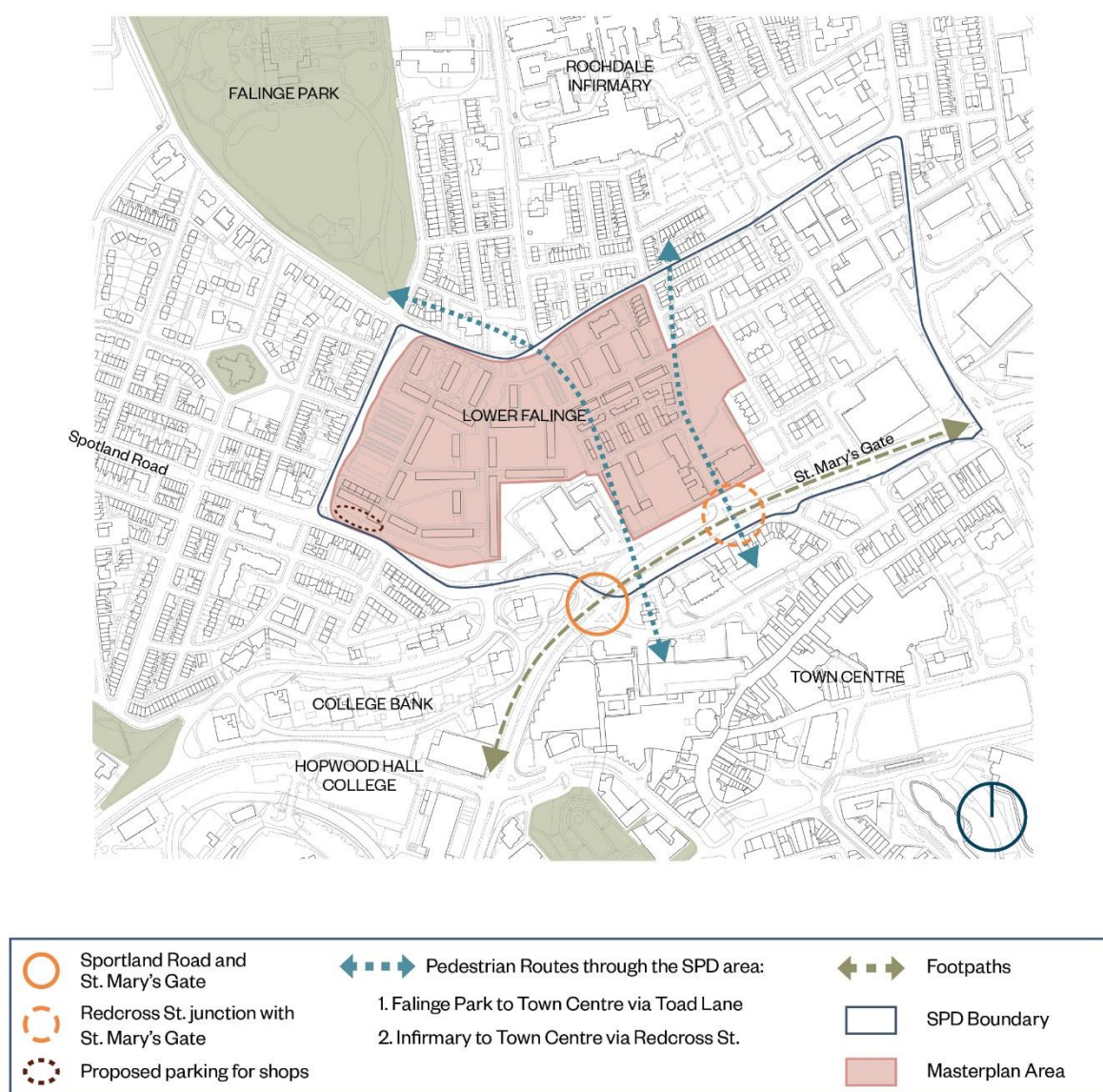
The SPD notes the following key issues in relation to movement, connectivity and access in the area:

- Issues with lack of ease, safety and quality of access perceived as a significant problem for pedestrians, cyclists, and disabled needs with a lack of permeability;
- Important pedestrian routes for the residents of Lower Falinge are along Spotland Road and across St. Mary's Gate to access the Town Centre, although connection to the Town Centre from the College Bank area is via an underpass which is closed during the evenings with concerns noted generally as to its safety.
- Other pedestrian routes across the area generally connect poorly to open spaces including Falinge Park and Broadfield Park.

- Vehicular movement and high volumes of traffic dominate the roads surrounding Lower Falinge. St Mary's Gate is the key route connecting Rochdale into the wider area and towards Manchester City Centre. Spotland Road and Sheriff Street are also characterised by fast and high volumes of traffic particularly at rush hour, causing high levels of congestion at key junctions including at Falinge Road and Sheriff Street.
- Lack of crossing facilities along St Mary's Gate encourages pedestrians to cross at random locations, placing them in live traffic and which can be difficult and dangerous to cross.

Figure 14 also illustrates the proposed transport strategy for the SPD area including linkages to adjoining areas.

Figure 14 Transport Strategy



The SPD identifies the following key transport improvement projects for the area:

- I. **Spotland Road and St Mary's Gate junction** - This junction is a significant node on the local area highway network and therefore any modifications to its operation need to be carefully considered. There are no pedestrian crossing facilities provided at road level as there is a pedestrian underpass; however the route is indirect and not very desirable. It is proposed that the whole junction is redesigned and reconfigured to take into account some of the following options:
 - Pedestrian facilities;
 - Junction re-design; and
 - Underpass upgrade.

- II. **Pedestrian Priority Routes through the neighbourhood** - Two key routes have been identified shown in the map below, that run through the SPD area.

- Falinge Park to Town Centre via Toad Lane
- Infirmary to Town Centre via Redcross Street

Providing clearly defined continuous routes through the neighbourhood will encourage movement to and through the study area, thereby improving permeability and providing better connections between key local attractors and the Town Centre.

It is important that the routes are clear to pedestrians and therefore guiding pedestrians along them using elements such as wayfinding signs and providing pedestrian crossings on desire lines are vital to their success. The provisions of footpaths with good quality level surfaces that are of sufficient width are also necessary to encourage use.

- III. **Footpaths alongside St Mary's Gate from College Road to Whitworth Road** – There are no existing provisions for pedestrians alongside the west side of St Mary's Gate from its junction with College Road up to its junction with Whitworth Road which is a distance of nearly 700m. Consideration has therefore been given to providing suitable pedestrian facilities along this length including:

- Footway from College Road to Spotland Road; and
- Footway from Spotland Road to Whitworth Road.

- IV. **Traffic management** - The area around Redcross Street would benefit from a reconfiguration of existing streets that would deliver improvements for pedestrians, giving them priority whilst still allowing access for businesses. The changes would seek to discourage through traffic and reduce traffic speeds.

- V. **Redcross Street junction with St Mary's Gate** - there is a clear desire line and high demand for pedestrians crossing at this junction where there are currently no pedestrian facilities. A staggered pedestrian crossing could be provided at this location; however this layout would require the closure of the gap in the central reservation on St Mary's Gate that currently allows right turning traffic. The closure of the gap could also help to reduce the number of vehicles running through the Redcross Street area but would obviously have other potential impacts on vehicle movements as a result of the re-distributed trips.

- VI. **Lower Falinge Estate Shops Parking** - There is an aspiration to retain the shops within the Lower Falinge Estate at the junction of Spotland Road and Sheriff Street and to provide a designated parking area that is off the main highway.

In addition, the following describe a range of pedestrian facilities that should be considered for inclusion as part of any development proposal or planning application. We have focussed on those facilities or improvements that will enhance and complement the other component parts of the plan, providing a safe and legible network and supporting the high level aims of the improvements:

- Green route/Streets for All;
- Way finding signs;
- Controlled Crossings, including Zebra, Puffin and Toucan crossings;
- Traffic Management measures including traffic calming, speed tables, speed cushions, priority chicane's, road narrowing, one way traffic management and road closures;
- Uncontrolled crossings such as pedestrian refuge island, kerb build-outs, flat top road hump;
- Speed limits;
- Cycle facilities;
- Bridges; and
- Elevated walkways.

7. Focus Areas

Proposals for development in Lower Falinge identified in this Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) should take account of the vision for the area, development, design and transport principles detailed in earlier sections of this SPD, and the area specific information set out below by identified 'focus area' (see map below for all focus areas).

The focus areas are not rigidly defined for development and do not imply that the SPD requires separate developments for these areas. Rather, development within the whole SPD area should be undertaken in a co-ordinated manner paying regard to all the guidance in this SPD, in order to deliver a well-planned and designed, coherent, interconnected and integrated development that delivers the regeneration of the area and its wider context.

Figure 15 Focus Areas



7.1 Focus Area 1: Abbeydale Road

The Abbeydale Road area within Lower Falinge is a residential area that is predominantly made up of deck access blocks of flats with some garage provision to its western edge. There is poor pedestrian permeability through the site and the area suffers from streets that are dominated by fast moving traffic. Abbeydale Road currently runs south from Falinge Road providing access to flat blocks but does not provide access through to Spotland Road which results in the inadequate Sheriff Street being over used.

Figure 16 Abbeydale Road



Extending **Abbeydale Road** and creating a new link through to Spotland Road offers the opportunity to:

- develop a strong north / south link through the site;
- create a green, tree lined route with wider pavements, designated cycle routes and a landscape buffer at the road edge;
- develop a new public open greenspace at the heart of the community that is easily accessed and a safe space; and
- improve pedestrian crossings on Sheriff Street and Falinge Road and links with Falinge Park

Making improvements to **Sheriff Street** can increase road safety, improve the pedestrian environment and introduce traffic calming measures. This could be done by:

- narrowing Sheriff Street as a traffic calming measure to increase the safety of the environment;
- creating wider, tree lined pavements and dedicated cycle lanes to enhance the pedestrian environment;
- locating three storey homes along the length of the street to create a strong frontage;
- focusing good quality urban design at key gateways with Sheriff Street, Falinge Road and Spotland Road; and

Specific blocks of flats are identified in the Masterplan as being most suitable for clearance to create a redevelopment site for new residential development. The following should be taken into account when considering any future development proposals:

- large scale clearance offers the opportunity for comprehensive residential redevelopment;
- new homes should be in a mix of types, tenures and sizes to offer varied accommodation to the local community;
- key gateways and focal points for development where there is the opportunity for increased density and massing would be on frontages of Abbeydale Road, Sheriff Street and Falinge Road;
- Retained blocks, if of high enough quality, offer the opportunity to be further improved and refurbished to improve living accommodation.

7.2 Focus Area 2: Redcross Street

The Redcross Street area is made up of existing residential properties with some garage uses, a number of commercial uses, a children's nursery, carparking and a cleared former millsite. This area has seen some recent residential development by RBH, around Samuel Ashworth Street replacing flat blocks with lower density housing development.

Figure 17 Redcross Street



The **Redcross Street** area as a whole offers the potential for residential redevelopment to:

- provide a mix of types and styles of homes for the community;
- create a stronger more cohesive residential community;
- improve local street connections and access throughout the area;
- bring underused and poor quality uses in to use to create more successful residential uses;
- create a strong frontage with high quality and high-density development along Howard Street to the north; and
- create a safer more pedestrian friendly environment throughout.

7.3 Focus Area 3: St Mary's Gate

St Mary's Gate is a dual carriageway running to the northern edge of Rochdale Town Centre dividing it from Lower Falinge. The road has existing underpasses which provide pedestrian access across it however these are consider in poor condition and unsafe. The existing frontage with St Mary's Gate is weak and the pedestrian environment poor.

Figure 18 St Mary's Gate



Along St Mary's Gate there is the opportunity to:

- improve crossing opportunities for pedestrians using new at grade crossings;
- set buildings back from the road to create a wider space for pedestrians, cyclists and to allow a green buffer between the road and non-car users;
- create a strong frontage along both sides of the road with good quality design and uses directly fronting it;
- locate non-residential uses at ground floor level of new buildings which could be appropriate for small retail, community and educational uses;
- have high density residential uses along the frontage where possible; and enhance lighting and quality public realm to create a safer and more attractive street scene.

7.4 Focus Area 4: Future Area of Focus

This area is presently formed by a number of uses including retail uses, car park, Nursery and Children's Centre and interspersed with some residential blocks. This creates a poor quality environment that does not benefit either of the current uses. The lack of any direct access means that it currently acts as a negative barrier instead of being the positive feature that it should be. In addition, the area can feel unsafe particularly after dark due to the lack of activity.

The fragmented nature of the area means it lacks focus in terms of uses and activity. These issues combine to create an overall impression of an unattractive, inaccessible and unappealing area at a key junction on a prominent, edge of town centre site.

Figure 19 Future Area of Focus



This area forms an important link between the wider largely residential area of Redcross Street and Lower Falinge to the west that has a large population, providing a substantial walk in catchment population, close to Rochdale Town Centre. It is important that any development within the SPD area, specifically in this area, promotes and enhances the pedestrian, land use and visual and physical linkages.

It is important that pedestrian linkages within this area and the SPD area are improved and ways explored to ensure that development in the SPD area enhances the future prospects for this part of the SPD area.

No major development is proposed within this area at present. In addition to the current uses found within the area, other appropriate uses may include car parking, offices and housing.

Townhead is a significant junction and gateway into the town centre and the Council will continue to seek and support proposals that assist in the regeneration of the area.

8. Delivery and Implementation

Introduction

The need for a robust and coherent delivery strategy for Lower Falinge has been a core principle running throughout the RBH Masterplanning process which underpins this SPD. This has included but is not limited to: a realistic and sound understanding of market aspirations and potential for change and investment, integrated feasibility and viability analysis which seeks to maximise public and private sector funding streams, and the need for land assembly to deliver the identified regeneration opportunity.

It is recognised that the Lower Falinge neighbourhood is not just a regeneration area but are people's homes and the Council and its partners will ensure that, as well as it providing the best possible form of development to achieve the vision set out in this SPD, it is entirely realistic and deliverable. It is also recognised that Lower Falinge has a strategic relationship to the wider regeneration plans for Rochdale Town Centre – this SPD will positively impact the housing and wider commercial markets in the area which will contribute to the ambitions for Rochdale Town Centre.

This SPD is a key component of the delivery strategy underpinning the Masterplan. This section provides further guidance around the approach to delivery, and sets out requirements for any future planning applications in the area.

Market Demand Considerations

Existing housing supply within the SPD area is heavily skewed towards flats and almost exclusively social rented in nature under the ownership of RBH.

Without the presence of the Registered Provider, RBH, and its associated tenants this is an area which would demonstrate traditional signs of market failure – limited choice within the housing offer, disconnected neighbourhoods and public realm issues, declining conditions within the housing stock, and low values. This has a knock-on effect to the wider housing market within the town centre fringe and town centre itself, impacting on the scale and nature of investment that can and will be attracted to the area.

Where development potential exists on under-utilised sites within the SPD boundary, viability is a significant barrier to delivery. Based on local house price data, quality residential development is not currently viable within the area. The Lower Falinge and College Bank Masterplan seeks to address viability over the long term through the comprehensive delivery of development and investment to create demand and establish new residential market and value benchmarks.

The Council's latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment (Draft, 2015) supports a need for the increased delivery of family houses sized 2-bedrooms and above to meet emerging need. In addition there is a recognised need to deliver a housing product within the SPD area to facilitate re-housing existing residents to release sites for development. There is also an identified need for a specialist older persons housing.

Soft market testing undertaken with a number of national and regional regeneration housebuilders and contractors undertaken through the RBH Masterplanning process supported the view that there is a strong and continued interest in investing within the SPD area if change can be delivered comprehensively.

Delivery Approach

Rochdale Council working alongside RBH as a major landowner and interested party is committed to delivering the regeneration of the SPD area in partnership with the private sector. Where it is identified to be necessary the Council is willing to use its statutory powers (including Compulsory Purchase Orders) to facilitate the holistic and comprehensive delivery of development and investment across the whole area.

The SPD seeks the comprehensive regeneration of the area captured within its boundary. Working alongside RBH it is intended that investment will be delivered through the procurement of a developer partner, and progression of a strategic outline planning application for the whole area.

Any development proposals promoted outside of this structure by individual landowners or interested parties will be required to demonstrate that they facilitate and contribute to the delivery of the wider regeneration objectives set out in this SPD and the Lower Falinge and College Bank Spatial Strategy Masterplan, and do not in any way prejudice their delivery.

Infrastructure and S106 Contributions

The Council will seek S106 contributions where these are necessary to make individual proposals acceptable in planning terms.

Applicants should be aware of the ambitions to deliver improvements along the A58 St Marys Gate corridor with detailed design work undertaken by AECOM as a strategic highways priority for the Council, alongside the desire to deliver strategic movement and open space provision as part of the masterplan.

Delivery of affordable housing as part of residential developments is an established policy requirement across Rochdale. Policy C4 of the Adopted Rochdale Core Strategy (2016) requires an affordable housing contribution of 7.5% of the development sales value of the overall scheme, with a preference for on-site delivery of an affordable product to meet local need. The policy allows for exceptional circumstances where off-site contributions will be accepted.

Notwithstanding identified local need for affordable housing provision across Rochdale, this SPD recognises the need to diversify housing supply within Lower Falinge – being almost exclusively affordable in nature at the time of adoption. It is recognised that the delivery of market housing within this area is required to deliver this diversification and to ensure the sustainability of retained affordable housing in the area – with only partial clearance of the existing estates proposed.

The SPD requires a clear and robust strategy around the strategic delivery of affordable housing, including an intermediate product, which can and should be delivered through future planning applications. This should include consideration of retained and improved affordable housing supply, the role for affordable supply as part of new developments to contribute to the wider implementation of the masterplan (including recognition of the need to re-house residents from redevelopment areas), and/or the contribution that off-site delivery could make to delivering the overall ambitions of the masterplan.

Planning Application Requirements

This SPD will be a material consideration in any future planning application relating to any site within its boundary; accordingly, any planning applications for development within the area will need to be supported by sufficient evidence and information to demonstrate they embed appropriate responses to the requirements set out within this SPD. This includes the need for justification for and evidence supporting any deviations from the requirements set out within the SPD.

The Council has a series of checklists summarising validation requirements associated with different types of applications, available at <http://www.rochdale.gov.uk/planning-and-building/apply-for-planning-permission/planning-permission---home/application-forms-and-guidance>. These checklists should be adhered to by all applications to demonstrate that development is appropriate in planning terms.

Appendix 1 – Barriers and nodes

Barrier	Where conditions create obstructions to free movement.	
1.	A58 St Mary's Gate	Dual Carriageway with little or no pedestrian footways along the length from the College to Whitworth Road.
2.	Spotland Road A680	Busy carriageway with high levels of traffic with no formal crossing provisions along the length of the road aside from the junction at Sherriff St.
3.	Holland Street	The road has excessive gradient differences from north side to south. Lack of permeability and access for pedestrians.
4.	College Road	Narrow one-way service/access road providing access to the garages. No footway on north side of road with the exception of one set of poor quality steps.
5.	Howard Street	High traffic volumes and excessive speeds for the road conditions which include a tight bend with poor forward visibility. There are no pedestrian crossing facilities along any part of the road.
Nodes	Locations where crossing activities currently take place.	
6.	College Road junction with St Mary's Gate	Pedestrian facilities across one arm only leading from Newgate to College Road. No footway around northwest corner.
7.	St Mary's Gate junction with Spotland Road	No pedestrian crossing facilities at road level and access are restricted by guardrail and retaining walls. Pedestrian provision at this junction is via a 24hr underpass. Current pedestrian desire path is crossing the grass verge.
8.	Redcross Street junction with St Mary's Gate	Although there are no pedestrian facilities at this location there is a clear desire line and high demand for pedestrians to cross.
9.	Cheetham Street underpass	Only formal pedestrian crossing of St Mary's Gate between Whitworth Road and Spotland Road.
10.	St Mary's Gate junction with Whitworth Road	No public footpath access to the junction from Spotland Road. Access is only possible by crossing the retail car parks.
11.	Howard Street junction with Rope Street	Uncontrolled crossings and traffic islands with very narrow and poor quality footways from the infirmary to the Town Centre
12.	Sherriff Street Roundabout	Mini roundabout that has dropped crossings but no tactile paving. Busy junction but limited safe opportunities to cross to access Falinge Park, School, Infirmary or the Town Centre.
13.	Spotland Road junction with Sheriff Street	Signal controlled junction with pedestrian facilities Despite the provision many pedestrians choose to cross away from the junction indicating desire lines are present to other destinations.
14.	Spotland Road pedestrian crossing	Existing controlled pedestrian crossing facility near the junction of Mitchell Street.

Appendix 2 – Glossary

Active frontages - Active frontages are building elevations that have frequent doors and windows, with few blank walls, internal uses visible from the outside, or spilling onto the street.

Adaptability - The capacity of a building or space to be changed so as to respond to changing social, technological and economic conditions.

Adoption - This is the process by which a document is formally adopted, and will form one of the Council's statutory Local Development Documents.

Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) - An annual monitoring report measures the delivery of policies and their performance against objectives and targets.

Building line - The line formed by the frontages of buildings along a street. The building line can be shown on a plan or section.

Bulk - The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. Also called massing.

Context - The area surrounding a development site. This may be the immediate local area (the site context), or a much wider town-wide context (the strategic context).

Community Strategy - An overarching local strategy for the future of the Borough, outlining actions towards environmental, economic and social well-being. All Council policies and strategies must comply with the Community Strategy.

Conformity (e.g. Chain of Conformity) - This indicates the different weights of documents and how they are informed by other documents.

Core Strategy - A key Development Plan Document which sets out the long term spatial vision for Rochdale. It outlines the spatial objectives and strategic policies required to deliver that vision.

Definition of streets - Enclosing the edges of streets with buildings and, sometimes, landscape so that they are clearly defined spaces.

Desire Lines - An imaginary line linking facilities or places, which would form a convenient and direct route for pedestrians and cyclists.

Development - The carrying out of building, engineering, mining or other operation in, on, over or under land, or the making of any material change in the use of any buildings or land.

Development Management (Generic Policies) - The control of development by the local planning authority through the consideration/determination of planning applications. These criteria-based policies ensure that all development within Rochdale will meet the spatial vision and objectives set out in the Core Strategy.

Development Plan Document (DPD) - Any document that includes policies, proposals or allocations and has been prepared and adopted under the statutory development plan procedures. These documents are: the Core Strategy; Area Action Plans; Site Specific Allocations and the Proposals Map. All DPDs are subject to independent examination.

Diversity - The range of different activities, uses and building types in an area.

Evidence Base - Various national, regional, sub-regional and local strategies and statistical data which are used to as a basis for writing policies in the Local Development Framework.

Footfall - A way of describing the number of pedestrians using a route. For example, busy shopping streets will have a high footfall, whereas a residential cul-de-sac will have a low footfall.

In-curtilage parking - Parking within a building's site boundary, rather than on a public street or space.

Landmark - A building, structure or space that stands out from its background by virtue of height, size or some other aspect of design.

Large floor-plate - A building type which covers a very large ground floor area. A supermarket is a typical example.

Legibility - The degree to which a place can be easily understood for people trying to find their way around.

Local Development Documents - The documents that make up the Local Development

Framework including: Development Plan Documents; Supplementary Planning Documents and the Statement of Community Involvement.

Local Plan Suite of Development Documents which constitute the statutory Development Plan for Rochdale Borough.

Local distinctiveness - The positive features of a place and its communities which contribute to its special character and distinguish it from other places.

Massing - The combined effect of the arrangement, volume and shape of a building or group of buildings. Also called bulk.

Mixed uses - A mix of different uses (for example, retail and residential) within a building, on a site or within a particular area.

Permeability - The characteristic of a well-connected network of streets, spaces and other routes.

Planning Applications - Process where people apply for permission to carry out development/alterations/demolition etc. The application is considered/determined by the Council taking into account the policies in the Development Plan.

Public Realm - Those parts of towns and villages that are available for use by everyone free of charge, and include streets, squares, lanes and open spaces.

Public Consultation - A formal process which invites the public to comment and make representation on the Local Development Document, this is a statutory element in the process and can take up to 6 weeks.

Range of tenures - A mix of different types of residential property, including (but not restricted to) privately owned, affordable housing, and shared ownership.

Renewable sources - Renewable sources of materials can be replenished naturally in a short period of time. Renewable energy sources capture their energy from ongoing natural processes such as sunshine, wind and flowing water.

Representations - Comments received by Rochdale MBC in response to public consultation on documents.

Scale - The impression of a building when seen in relation to its surroundings, or the size of parts of a building or its details, particularly as experienced in relation to the size of a person. Sometimes it is the total dimensions of a building which give it its sense of scale; at other times it is the size of the individual building elements and the way in which they are combined. The concept is a difficult and ambiguous one: often the word is simply used as a synonym for 'size'.

Stakeholder - Anyone with an interest in Rochdale's development. This includes professionals, businesses and the whole community.

Street furniture - Structure in a street or space. For example, bus shelters, light columns, signs, seating and litter bins.

Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) - Supplementary Planning Documents provide additional detail to Local Development Framework Policies, providing guidance to developers and their designers on what is expected of them. If applications for planning do not conform with the SPD they may be refused.

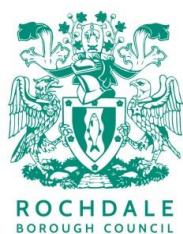
Sustainable Development - Development that simultaneously meets environmental, economic and community needs without comprising the needs of future generations.

Traffic Calming - Traffic management measures designed to reduce the speed of vehicles along routes, particularly in residential areas.

Urban Design - The art of making places. Urban design involves the design of buildings, groups of buildings, spaces and landscapes, in villages, towns and cities, and the establishment of frameworks and processes which facilitate successful development.

Urban grain - The pattern of buildings and their plots and how they combine to form blocks within a settlement. Urban grain may be 'fine', comprising small blocks and frequent street junctions, or it may be 'coarse', comprising large blocks and infrequent street junctions. This can be related to townscapes and streets.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP) - Adopted in 2006, the development plan currently in force for



Lower Falinge Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Draft February 2021


the whole Borough. This Plan will remain valid until replaced by new Development Plan Documents.



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