

**Calder Vale Park,
Simonstone Lane,
Simonstone, BB12 7ND**

**Erection of New Investment
Casting Foundry within
existing factory complex**

FORT VALE



Client:
Fort Vale Engineering Ltd

Addendum Planning Statement

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Addendum Planning Statement is intended to be read alongside the 'Planning Support Statement' prepared by JWPC Ltd (May 2010) (Appendix 1) which was submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council as part of the planning application (Reference 3/2010/0564) for the erection of a new Investment Casting Foundry at the rear of the Fort Vale site, Calder Vale Park, Simonstone.
- 1.2 That planning application was approved (following referral to the Department of Communities and Local Government) on 11 April 2011. However, due to a number of factors, it is now necessary for a revised proposal to be submitted. The proposed building will retain the same footprint and height but will be relocated slightly and have a more contemporary external appearance which will assimilate better with proposed adjacent uses.
- 1.3 This application has been made following further discussions with officers of the Council and with the benefit of reviewing the internal and external consultation responses to the previous application.

2. Background

- 2.1 Calder Vale Park is the UK base of Fort Vale Engineering (FVE), a world leading manufacturer of specialist valves required for the movement of chemicals, liquefied gases and food goods by bulk tanker. Whilst the site currently employs 249 members of staff on a three shift pattern over 24 hours, seven days a week, it has a healthy order book and there is therefore an acute need to rationalise and make more efficient its operations. One way to achieve this is through the construction of a foundry on site.
- 2.2 At present, FVE cast specialist valve assembly parts at their Foundry and No 4 Shed Valley Mill sites in Nelson (where 24 staff are currently employed). The detached nature of these premises from the main production/assembly plant at Simonstone, together with the dated facilities of the Nelson premises have a bearing upon operational efficiency – as a result of which FVE wish to integrate both processes on a single site (at Calder Vale Park). It is anticipated that staff from the Nelson plant would transfer to Simonstone (aided by a direct bus service) but other local job opportunities may arise.
- 2.3 Planning Application 3/2010/0564 was submitted to Ribble Valley Borough Council and proposed a foundry building of 3250m² – with a footprint of 65m by 50m. It would have a shallow dual pitched roof measuring 7m to gutter level of the roof (higher to the two ridges). Ancillary office accommodation would be provided over 2 floors totalling 160m². That application proposed a transport yard to the north of the foundry building with a servicing area for vehicles to the 'front' (west) of the building. Staff parking (approximately 70 spaces) would be provided in a car park to the east of the foundry.
- 2.4 Whilst the foundry building approved would fall partly within the 'settlement boundary' of the Calder Vale/former Mullards site, the majority of it would fall within the Green Belt. In the Planning Committee Report of February 2011, it is stated:

'It is evident from the development that the proposal does involve an intrusion into the adjoining Green Belt land yet the area the subject of this application has in many can also be referred to as a former developed area. The site is therefore of a brownfield nature and has little landscape value'

- 2.5 The entire red edge of the application site falls within the operation curtilage of the former Mullards works with most of the site being 'made land' following the filling in of a number of lagoons.



Fig 1: Site of former lagoons now made land to the west of the Mullard's works site. Note existing hedgerows to demarcate boundaries to the north-west and south-west

- 2.6 In balancing the planning considerations of the proposal, the Council's Committee Report went on to balance the harm by virtue of inappropriate development in the Green Belt, against the need for the facility and the resulting cessation of travel movements between the site and the foundry in Nelson and the impact of the scheme on the visual amenities of the area. It concluded:

'I accept that the scheme would impinge on the openness of the Green Belt but having regard to all other material considerations and in particular that the land could be regarded as previously developed, and that the visual impact will be limited given the extent of the existing buildings, I consider that this scheme would be acceptable in relation to terms of Green Belt issues.'

- 2.7 That planning application was resolved unanimously to be approved by Committee subject to referral to the Department of Communities and Local Government. In a letter of 6th April 2011, Senior Planning Officer Sarah Lewis stated:

'Having carefully considered the relevant planning issues raised by this proposal together with the representations received, and having regard to his policy on call in, the Secretary of State has concluded on balance that intervention would not be justified as there is not significant conflict with national planning policies on the above matters, or any other sufficient reason, to warrant calling in the application for his own determination.'

- 2.8 The application was then approved by Ribble Valley Borough Council on 4th April 2011 subject to a number of conditions. However, since that approval a number of factors have meant that the foundry cannot be developed in the manner authorised by the consent. A resubmission application is therefore made to secure an alternative planning permission.

3. Reasons for Revised Proposal

3.1 The red edge of the application site and the footprint of the proposed foundry building will remain exactly as per the approved scheme. However, it has been entirely redesigned for a number of reasons which can be summarised as follows:

3.2 Operational issues

The inter-relationship between the Foundry and Building 'S' has been further considered following the previous approval. The efficient transfer of materials and good between the rear dispatch area of Building 'S' – recently approved under Planning Application 3/2011/0222, is critical to the operation of FVE at this site. Raw materials will be transported to the foundry which will then manufacture FVE products. Following this, this will be transferred by fork lift truck to the ancillary facilities building to the south of Building 'S' for testing and Quality Control checks and/or to the dispatch area within the proposed new extension to Building 'S'. Circulation within the area is therefore critical.

3.3 The approved scheme requires materials to be transferred to the northern elevation of the foundry. This is a circuitous route that would require fork-lift trucks to climb/descend a graded service yard – contrary to health and safety best practice. The repositioning and reconfiguration of the foundry and the service yard (by moving the building further away from the major changes in levels on site) will allow for a retaining wall to be erected and a more level route to be created for the transfer of materials between the two sites. Repositioning of the building will also reduce site preparation and build costs.

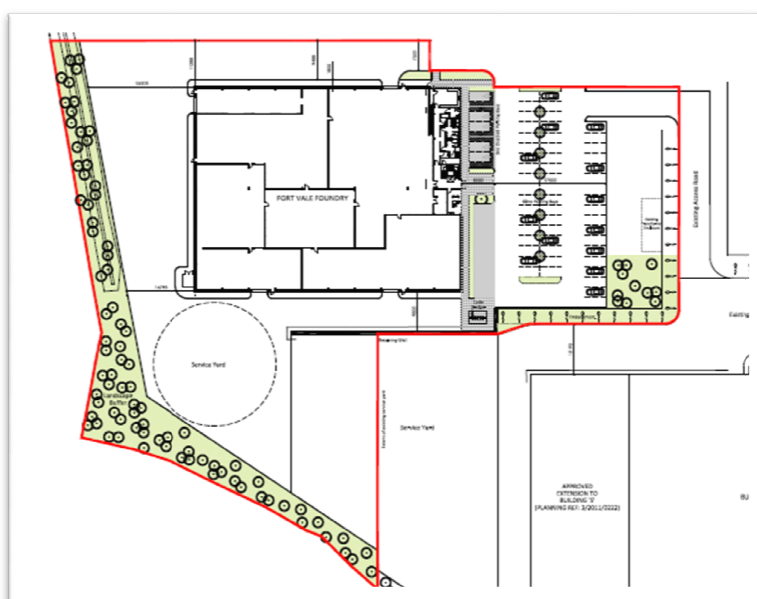


Fig 2: Proposed revised layout of foundry site

3.4 Circulation of vehicles

Repositioning of the car park to the east of the foundry ensures that staff and visitors are segregated from the commercial activity of deliveries and stock movements to the rear of the building. Cars will use the existing service road which runs along the north side of Building 'S' but will turn north into the car park whilst commercial vehicles will continue into the service yards for either Building 'S' or the foundry. It is anticipated that the staff car parking will be further segregated following the development of the remainder of the site. In the long term, access to the car park may be sought from the north – thus keeping staff and visitor vehicles entirely separate from commercial traffic. However, this proposal

3.5 Calder Vale Park

Fort Vale Engineering are currently preparing a masterplan for the residual part of the former Mullards factory site i.e. the open land to the north of FVE's Building 'S'. It is proposed that this land will be developed as a business park, providing accommodation for Class B1, B2 and B8 uses as well as for additional facilities for FVE.

3.6 Having reflected on the approved scheme for the foundry, it was considered by FVE that its functional and rather austere appearance would not sit well with office or light industrial buildings in a business park setting. Moreover, the presence of a serving/transport yards abutting higher quality businesses would potentially harm the amenities and therefore potential viability of these adjacent units.

3.7 Fort Vale Engineering are keen that the foundry building 'sets the tone' for future development of Calder vale Park. It is therefore imperative that it appears a well designed and attractive building in its own right. Following the commissioning of new project architects, FVE took the opportunity to consider the wholesale redesign of the exterior of the foundry building, in order to present a less harsh industrial facade – particularly on the eastern elevation which will face the proposed Calder Vale Park.

3.8 Visual Amenity

The repositioning of the offices to the eastern elevation will result in a more interesting elevation, articulated with fenestration over two floors; more akin to a Class B1 use. The

'hot end' of the foundry will remain at the western side of the building, ensuring noise and activity is kept away from sensitive receptor points i.e. nearby residents.

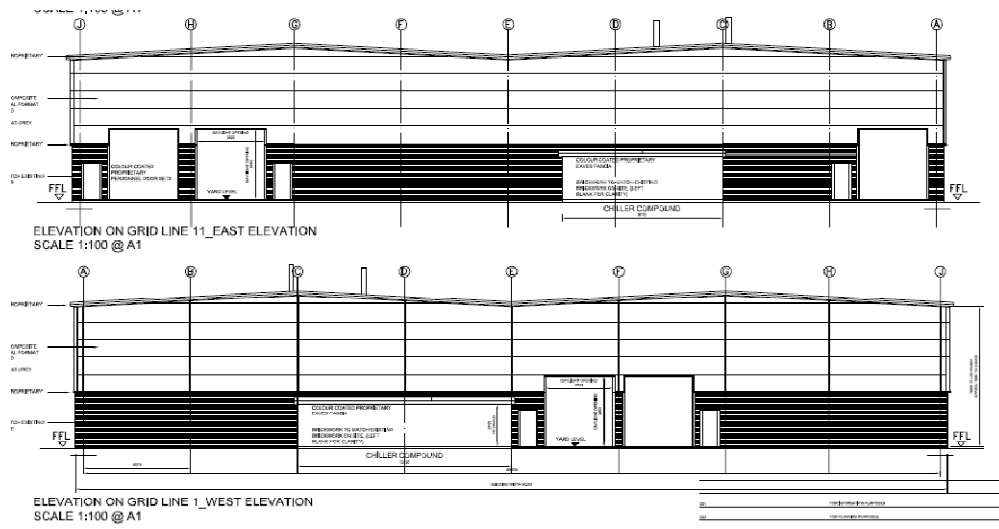


Fig 3: Elevations of approved foundry building



Fig 4: Eastern elevation of revised foundry building.

- 3.9 The proposed foundry would be far more attractive addition to the visual amenities of the area. The applicants are willing to discuss with officers the final finishes of the building (including the cladding) to ensure that it is assimilated within this landscape.
- 3.10 Additional landscape details are shown on the resubmission application including a landscape buffer that bounds the site to the west and south-west. This seeks to further improve the setting of the building, particularly when seen from the open land to the west.

4. Planning Implications

- 4.1 The application as submitted continues to propose a building of the same mass and footprint as that approved previously. The previous application was considered by the planning authority (and DCLG) to be partly compliant with the Development Plan (in particular Policies G3, EMP7 and EMP8) but was considered to be partly in conflict with Policy ENV4 (Green Belts). Nonetheless, given the economic development benefits of the proposal and the fact that the site is previously-developed land – formerly used as part of the Mullards Works, then on balance that scheme was acceptable and was approved.
- 4.2 Policy implications for this proposal remain the same. The main issue to consider is whether there is any additional impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and its character as a result of this revised proposal. The new position of the foundry would be an additional 29m west of the previously approved building. However, it would remain entirely within the operational curtilage of the former Mullard's site and within the red edge of the approved scheme.
- 4.3 The applicants accept that (as with the previous application) the proposal represents, in part at least 'inappropriate development' within the Green Belt as defined by PPG2. However, the actual harm caused by reason of a loss of openness is limited. The building would clearly be seen 'within the wire' of this established employment site on land formerly used as lagoons. As the building would be located 29m further to the west, a smaller service yard will replace a 70 space car park. The service yard itself would have less of an impact on the Green Belt than the presence of up to 70 cars parked for 8 hours each (3 shifts per day). This would also allow for a generous landscape buffer to be created on raised ground, thus further screening the building and assimilating it better within the landscape. In this context the proposal would have a very marginally greater impact on the Green Belt than the approved scheme and would have less of a harmful impact on the visual amenities of the Green Belt.
- 4.4 Balanced against the harm caused by virtue of the fact the proposal is by definition inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the marginal loss of openness, is the fact that the foundry is required to sustain and improve the operations of FVE – one of the largest employers in Ribble Valley. The foundry itself will provide at least 24 skilled jobs and will allow for greater efficiency in the production of FVE's goods.

4.6 The applicants are mindful of recent Statements from the Secretary Of State and Planning Minister following the budget as part of the 'Planning for Growth' agenda. In particular, *'Positive planning: a new focus on driving sustainable development'* (15 June 2011) is of relevance. In this Statement, Planning Minister Greg Clark confirmed that there is *'a new presumption in favour of sustainable development'*. It encourages local authorities to 'plan positively' for new development and to support such planning applications. These should be supported:

'... unless the adverse impacts of allowing development would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policy objectives in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole.'

4.7 FVE firmly believe that the economic, social and environment benefits of this proposal outweigh any harm to the Green Belt. Given that the above statement is a 'material consideration in the determination of planning applications', this ensures that the application proposal should meet with approval.

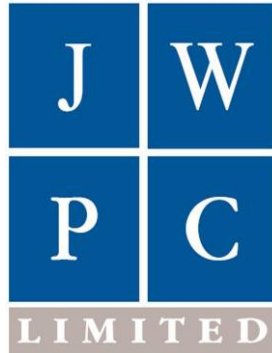
4.8 Moreover, it is necessary to remind the local planning authority that the relocation of the foundry from Nelson (Pendle District) to Simonstone will allow for greater efficiencies in terms of travel patterns of both staff and materials between the two sites – thus contributing to sustainable development objectives.

5. Summary

- 5.1 This planning application is identical in nature to that recently approved by Ribble Valley Borough Council under Application 3/2010/0564. The site boundaries will remain the same but the foundry will be positioned to the west of the approved building. Its external appearance will also be revised to a far higher standard, more commensurate with the business park environment which is envisaged for the remainder of the former Mullard's site. Car parking and servicing areas will be reconfigured to improve circulation and the visual amenities of the site and a more significant landscape buffer will be created to the west and south-west.
- 5.2 Whilst the foundry itself would sit further into the Green Belt, and therefore by default, cause harm by virtue of it being 'inappropriate development' in terms of PPG2, there are significant material planning considerations which together represent 'very special circumstances' that override this presumption against such development. The consolidation of FVE activities at Simonstone (and reduced traffic movements); the need to reconcile the proposal with the development of the remainder of the former Mullard's works; safety/circulation matters; the need to improve the appearance of the building and its service yard within its setting; and the creation of at least 24 jobs are all significant factors in favour of this proposal. The Government's endorsement of a presumption in favour of sustainable development states that unless '*adverse impacts... significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits*' applications such as this should be approved. The Council is therefore politely requested to take this and the above factors into account and to approve this application.

6. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Planning Support Statement to Application 3/2010/0564



**Planning application for erection of new foundry within existing
factory complex**

at

Calder Vale Park, Simonstone Lane, Simonstone, BB12 7ND

for

Fort Vale Engineering Ltd

PLANNING SUPPORT STATEMENT

May 2010

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- 2.0 Application Site & Surroundings
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- 4.0 Planning Policy
- 5.0 Assessment of Planning Considerations

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement has been prepared by planning consultants, JWPC Ltd, in support of the planning application made by Fort Vale Engineering Ltd to extend their existing manufacturing facilities at Simonstone. Fort Vale's intention is to erect a single storey Investment Casting Foundry, integrated with the existing production plant, in order that their present casting facilities can be transferred from their existing premises, inefficiently located within the Borough of Pendle. This will create a more modern, efficient and sustainable combined process on a single site.
- 1.2 The new site forms part of the extensive former Mullard's premises located to the west of Simonstone Lane. The majority of Mullard's plant and buildings were demolished in 2005/2006, with only one of the former production buildings ('Building S') being retained for refurbishment and occupation by Fort Vale. Following extensive improvements, together with the addition of a new 'headquarters' office building, the Calder Vale Park site is now established as the international headquarters of Fort Vale Engineering Ltd. Fort Vale are world leaders in the production of specialist valves required for the movement of chemicals, liquefied gases and food goods by bulk tanker.



New Company Headquarters , Simonstone

- 1.3 Despite operating on an international basis, with business branches within the United Kingdom and abroad, including Russia, Singapore, Australia, the USA, Netherlands, and China (being the only manufacturing facility outside the UK), FVE values its traditional links with the north-west and particularly with North-East Lancashire where it has a substantial workforce. At present some 249 employees work at the Simonstone premises.

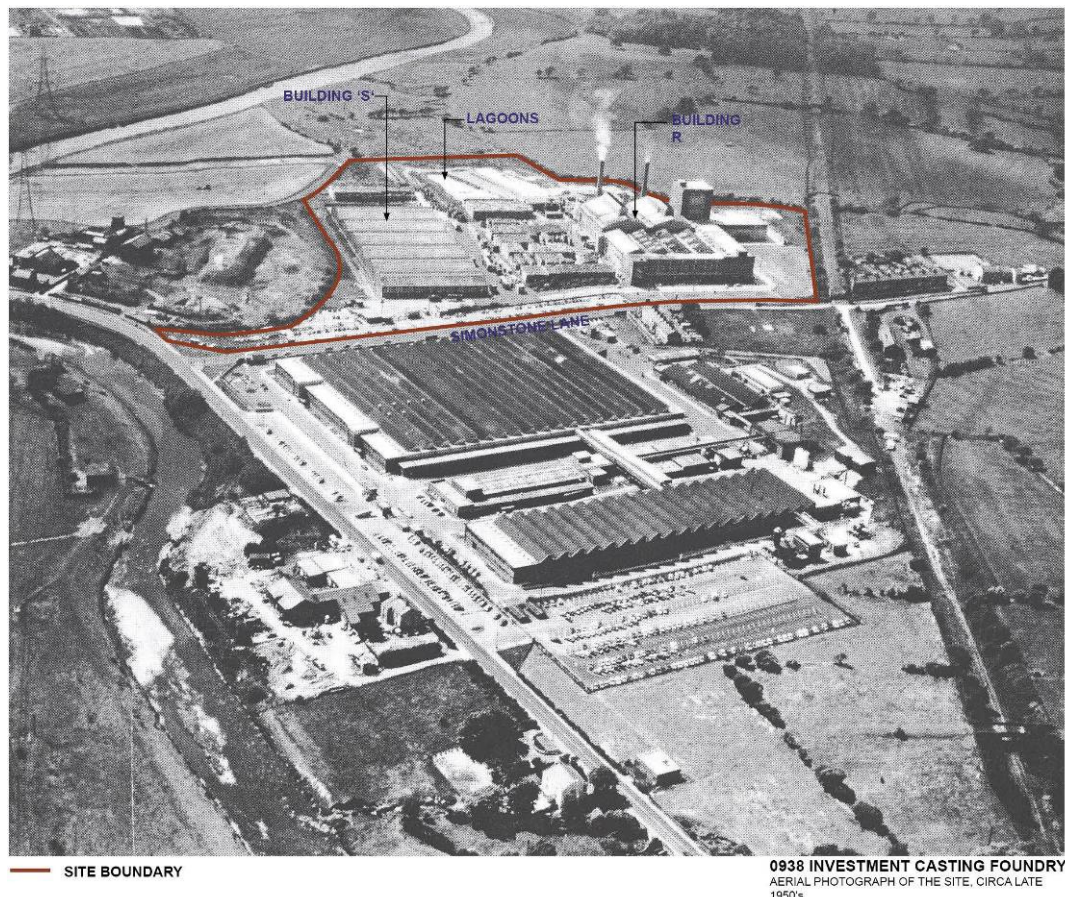
- 1.4 As part of the production process, FVE presently cast specialist valve assembly parts at their Foundry and No 4 Shed Valley Mill sites in Nelson (where 24 staff are currently employed). The detached nature of these premises from the main production/assembly plant at Simonstone, together with the dated facilities of the Nelson premises have a bearing upon operational efficiency – as a result of which FVE wish to integrate both processes on a single site (at Simonstone). It is anticipated that staff from the Nelson plant would transfer to Simonstone (aided by a direct bus service) but other local job opportunities may arise.
- 1.5 Before deciding on this strategy, FVE assessed alternative options, including procuring cast components abroad, but concluded that their business should be focused upon the Simonstone premises, with their excellent transportation links, together with the extensive site area associated with the former Mullard’s plant.
- 1.6 FVE’s proposal is therefore to erect a single storey, 3250 sqm foundry immediately adjacent to the western end of the main premises (to the rear of the existing production building), occupying a part of the former Mullard’s site which was utilised for the siting of water lagoons and also external storage areas. This siting has been selected for operational reasons, allowing the most efficient working relationship between the two buildings. However, the siting also enables a Class B2 foundry use to be sited in a more peripheral location where it is remote from the residential properties on Simonstone Lane. The peripheral siting also minimises the risk of interference with the future development of the remainder of the former Mullard’s site, fronting Simonstone Lane and to the north of FVE.
- 1.7 A notable feature of the application is that, although sited within the operational curtilage of the former Mullard’s plant, the new foundry would be sited primarily on Green Belt land. At present, the Green Belt boundary passes through the former Mullard’s site, effectively separating the area which was occupied by buildings from the more open ancillary area to the rear. The relationship to the Green Belt boundary is illustrated on the application plan.
- 1.8 Consequently, one of the principal requirements of the application is to explain the “*very special circumstances*” which support the siting of the new building within the Green Belt. Those reasons are set out later in this Statement.
- 1.9 The application is further supported by the following documents:
- Design & Access Statement
 - Ground Investigation
 - Flood Risk Assessment



Refurbished former Mullards Building 'S' in foreground, with original former Mullards building (across Simonstone Lane and not forming part of the Fort Vale site), to the rear. The existing internal circulation road will serve new foundry Parking and HGV service areas will be rationalised as part of this application to provide full off-road facilities

2.0 Application Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The proposed new foundry would be located immediately to the rear of the recently refurbished main production building (itself being the former building 'S' associated with the former Mullard premises (constructed in the 1950s). Those premises, located to the west of Simonstone Lane, formed part of the wider Mullard Simonstone works which, since the closure of the (Philips) TV component business, have been transformed into a significant employment centre, occupied by a wide variety of businesses.



Former Mullards Simonstone works with 'Fort Vale operational site' edged red
The substantial building scale and height can be clearly seen. With the exception of Building 'S' all the former buildings on the Fort Vale site have recently been demolished

- 2.2 Together with the nearby Altham Business Park, the Simonstone/Altham area has become one of the major employment locations for the sub-region, taking advantage of the close relationship to the M65 and M66 motorways.
- 2.3 Regeneration of the former Mullard's site to the west of Simonstone Lane would therefore be consistent not only with the long-standing industrial land use but also with revitalisation and expansion of the Simonstone/Altham industrial area. The vast majority of that area lies outwith the Green Belt but there are a limited number of inconsistencies where operational sites are sited partly outside and partly within the Green Belt/ adopted

Settlement boundaries. One such instance occurred on the eastern extremity of the former Mullard's site where planning permission was eventually granted (on appeal) for a major office development.

- 2.4 The site proposed for the investment casting foundry lies to the rear of the main FVE premises in order to achieve a close relationship to the production building. At present this area comprises the service yard to building 'S', together with a gravel hardstanding and the remains of the three (now infilled) former water storage lagoons associated with the Mullard's operation. During Mullard's occupation, this area was utilised for a series of ancillary purposes of an 'open nature'. These have changed the character of the site from its previous role as agricultural land to that of ancillary industrial site.



Location of the proposed foundry showing site of infilled water storage enclosures and related former Mullards structures

- 2.5 Whilst that site forms part of the continuing operational curtilage to Fort Vale, it is unusually bisected by the Green Belt boundary (possibly reflecting a more open industrial use when the Green Belt boundary was affirmed by Burnley Borough Council in the 1980s).
- 2.6 To the west of this area (and partly fringed by Simonstone Brook) is open farmland (the initial part of which also formed part of Mullard's ownership and featured in its original outline planning permission). Separate discussions are continuing with the Local Planning Authority regarding the planning status of that additional area.
- 2.7 To the south of the site is the River Calder and its flood plain. A limited degree of flood risk has previously been identified in relation to the Mullard's/FVE site, this being addressed in the Flood Risk Assessment which

accompanied both the previous planning application and also the current proposal. The northern boundary of the former Mullard's site aligns with the dismantled Blackburn-Padiham railway line (long intended as the route of the Simonstone bypass).



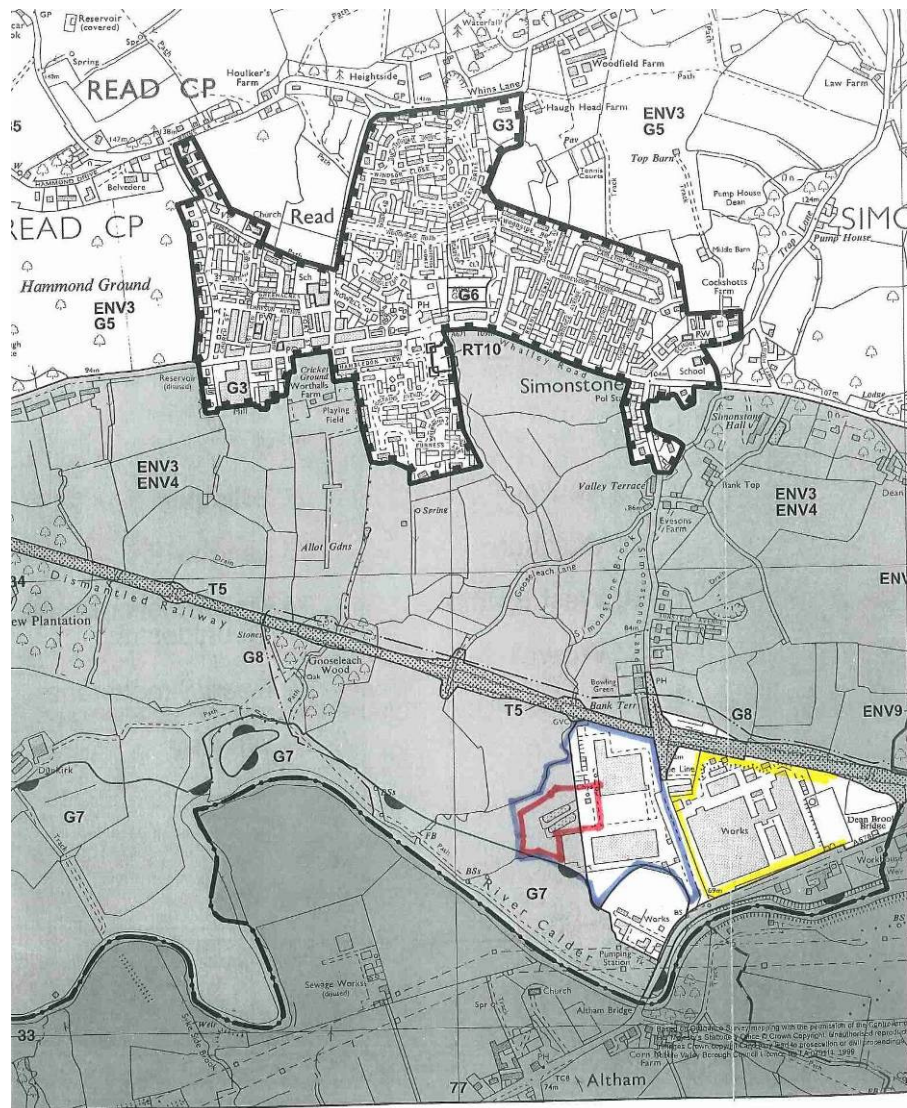
Western part of former Mullards operational site , open countryside beyond, (adjacent fields originally owned by Mullards – and now by Fort Vale - and subject to the original outline planning permission for the production site). Foreground and the countryside beyond are within the Green Belt

- 2.8 Simonstone Lane, itself (which forms the eastern boundary of the FVE site) is a through traffic route which crosses the route of the former railway line and linking Burnley Road, Altham with Blackburn Road, Simonstone. To the north of the former railway line are scattered residential properties, with a further small pocket of terraced housing being sited just off Simonstone Lane at Railway Terrace.

3.0 The Proposed Development

- 3.1 Fort Vale Engineering's intention is to erect a new industrial building towards the rear of their current manufacturing premises at Calder Vale Park. The building will accommodate a new investment casting foundry, integrated with their existing precision engineering production facilities. This will introduce considerable operational efficiencies, replacing the present situation where components are cast at Shed Valley Mill, in Nelson, and then transported daily between the two Fort Vale factories.
- 3.2 Full details of the proposed new foundry are provided on the submitted drawings and also the Design & Access Statement which accompanies the application. These documents illustrate the intended siting, scale and external appearance of the new building.
- 3.3 In terms of location, the building is located within part of the original operational curtilage of the former Mullard's works which (prior to demolition of the majority of the buildings in 2006) extended to approximately 30,000 square metres in floor area to the west of Simonstone Lane (with a similar area sited to the east of the Lane). The former Mullard's premises were established in the 1950s as a world centre for the production of television tubes and incorporated a substantial floor area devoted to hot processes – glass making. This involved buildings of a substantial scale and also of a height in excess to those associated with the current and proposed Fort Vale premises.
- 3.4 Any assessment of the new application should therefore take account of the previous land use and planning history of this site, associated with what was a major regional (if not national) business. Fort Vale's decision to retain and recently refurbish one of the main buildings as its international headquarters and production base still leaves a considerable proportion of the original Mullard's operational site as cleared/semi-derelict land. This extensive brownfield area retains its historic Class B2/B8 use and will no doubt come forward for appropriate employment regeneration in future years.
- 3.5 The concentration of the Fort Vale activities at the southern part of the brownfield site retains maximum flexibility for the future regeneration of the remainder on a comprehensive basis (either served by a joint access arrangement or possibly with independent access from Simonstone Lane). The site has the potential to make a significant contribution towards the Borough's employment land requirements through its emerging Local Development Framework and through normal planning application/development control channels.
- 3.6 Consequently, there is considerable logic in safeguarding the integrity and development flexibility of the residual land by concentrating any further Fort Vale buildings at the southern end of the site, where close operational links can be formed with existing production buildings. Such location also provides maximum efficiency in terms of vehicle circulation routes, car parking and service areas and also other essential site infrastructure/ services. The resulting corporate efficiencies are consistent with the core sustainable economic development aims of central government.

- 3.7 The optimum siting to the new building is to the rear of the former Mullard's site which will allow the efficient transfer of materials between the investment casting foundry and production building 'S'. Under Mullard's regime, this area was used for a variety of ancillary open purposes, including outside storage, vehicle hardstandings, vehicular access and also a series of engineered water storage areas. Evidence of this can be seen from the historic aerial photographs but are also still discernible on site, notwithstanding that following Mullard's departure, much of this area was levelled, with the 'lagoons' being filled with inert material.
- 3.8 The development site is of a wholly brownfield nature and has little landscape and no nature conservation value. The development site is therefore wholly accommodated on brownfield land which enjoys a historic Class B2/B8 use but, inconsistently, the (Local Plan) Settlement/Green Belt boundary passes through the site on a north-south alignment. This is highly unusual bearing in mind the enormous scale of the former Mullard premises when the Green Belt was designated. Normally one would have expected the settlement boundary to correspond with the operational curtilage of the major employment site. Alternatively, that part of the Mullard's site which extended into the Green Belt could legitimately have been designated as a "*Major Developed Site within the Green Belt*" where any future planning application would have been tested against the pre-conditions of Annex C within green belt guidance, PPG2.
- 3.9 Reflecting on those pre-conditions (and accepting that no such 'Major Developed Site' designation exists in this case), it is relevant that the proposed foundry is of a lesser footprint (and no higher than) the previous structures which existed for Mullard's operations.
- 3.10 As part of the development, the existing internal access road network will be extended, being linked with new service and parking areas. The proposed hardstandings are set back from the historic operational boundary, allowing perimeter landscaping to be introduced. This could be conditioned and would soften the western boundary to the site, although views into this area are distant from any public footpath or roadway.
- 3.11 The Design & Access Statement describes the development in all the more detail and also explains measures which will be taken to safeguard the surrounding environment from any adverse effect in terms of noise, air pollution or effluent disposal.



Local Plan
Extract.



Calder Vale Park (Fort Vale) site (ex Mullards site)
Application site
(residue of former Mullards site).

4.0 Planning Policy

- 4.1 The policy background against which the application will be considered comprises national planning policy (in the form of Planning Policy Statements and Planning Policy Guidance), the policies of the North West Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS12) and the saved policies of the Adopted Ribble Valley Local Plan. These saved policies will, in due course, be replaced by the Local Development Framework for Ribble Valley which will comprise a number of separate documents of which the most relevant will be the Core Strategy DPD and the Employment Land DPD. A consultation draft of the Core Strategy is due to be published for consultation purposes in mid-2010.

- 4.2 The North West of England Plan sets out the policy base for Local Development Documents within the region. Section 6 of the Plan, ‘Achieving Sustainable Economy’, lists a number of policies and measures designed to protect and promote employment. Of particular relevance are policies W1 which emphasises the need for a strong economy and W3 which sets out an increased requirement for employment land in Lancashire of 294 hectares in the period up to 2021.
- 4.3 The RSS reflects important Government guidelines provided by PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Planning) and PPG2 (Green Belts) – both of which have a bearing upon the current planning application. These are now supplemented by PPS4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth) with its important messages to promote a healthy economy as the basis for the revival of the nation’s social and economic base.
- 4.4 Important for Fort Vale’s application is the Government’s confirmation (within PPS4) of its overarching objective to promote sustainable economic growth by building prosperous communities by improving the economic performance of cities, towns, regions, sub-regions and local areas, both urban and rural. The objectives also confirm the need to deliver more sustainable patterns of development by reducing the need to travel, especially by car, and to respond to climate change.
- 4.5 Importantly, the PPS provides specific guidance to assist the determination of planning applications for economic development. Included with this is guidance on determining planning applications which are not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan. Here, Local Planning Authorities are advised to:
- a) weigh market and other economic information alongside environmental and social information;
 - b) take full account of any longer term benefits, as well as the costs, of development, such as job creation or improved productivity including any wider benefits to national, regional or local economies; and
 - c) consider whether those proposals help to meet the wider objectives of the development plan.
- 4.6 Further guidance is given (Policy EC12) on determining planning applications for economic development in rural areas. This confirms that the re-use of buildings in the countryside for economic development will usually be preferable.
- 4.7 PPG2 explains that, with very few exceptions, development within the Green Belt is “*inappropriate*” by definition. Inappropriate development will be resisted unless an applicant can demonstrate “*very special circumstances*”. Such circumstances will be assessed against the 5 defined purposes of including land in Green Belts, as well as the 6 objectives which Greens Belt designation will fulfil.
- 4.8 PPG2 (Annex C) explains that Green Belts contain some major developed sites such as factories which may be in continuing use or may be redundant. These sites remain subject to development control policies for Green Belts, and the Green Belt notation should be carried across them. If a major developed site is specifically identified in an adopted local plan or UDP, infilling or redevelopment meeting the redevelopment criteria set out in para C4 is not “*inappropriate development*”.

- 4.9 Whilst it is acknowledged that the former Mullards site is not a designated ‘Major Developed Site’ we believe that the acceptability of any scheme to regenerate that part of the site now located within the Green Belt should take account of the previous substantial scale of the buildings and site activity associated with the former Mullards works, together with the visual and amenity impact which the historic use would have had upon the adjacent countryside.
- 4.10 At District level, the broad thrust of the Local Plan (saved policies) is to promote sustainable development, whilst at the same time providing for the needs of the local population, in line with regional aims. Economic development is an important plank of planning policy.
- 4.11 Saved Policy G1 confirms that all development proposals will be expected to provide a high standard of building design and landscape quality. Development which does so will be permitted, unless it adversely affects the amenities of the surrounding area. Impact upon surroundings and also compatibility with existing and proposed land uses are other important considerations. Development should also be efficient in terms of land use and must safeguard safety on the highway network.
- 4.12 Settlement Policy G3 confirms that within the villages of Mellor Brook, Read and Simonstone planning permission will be granted for the development and redevelopment of land wholly within the settlement boundary, together with the rehabilitation and re-use of existing buildings. We believe that more contemporary (& emerging) planning policies for both Ribble Valley and for adjacent Hyndburn District) will recognise the combined Major Employment Area at Simonstone/Altham as of major importance to the local (if not sub-regional) economy. This expanding employment area (radiating out from the original Mullard’s site) makes a major contribution to addressing the employment requirements of not only Ribble Valley but also Burnley and Hyndburn Districts. Vitality of these areas is an important factor which will undoubtedly be reflected in future Local Development Frameworks.
- 4.13 Policy ENV4 states that within the Green Belt, planning permission will not be given except in very special circumstances for the erection of new buildings other than for the purpose of agriculture, forestry, outdoor sport and recreation and for other land uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of the designation. Cross-references made to Government guidance (PPG2). Paragraph 4.2.24 confirms that *“the only exceptions to this policy are developments which show overwhelming reasons of local need. Such reasons will include developments essential to provide or improve essential local services where these cannot be met elsewhere in more suitable locations”*.
- 4.14 Policy ENV4 has been prepared within the context of PPG2 which, in turn, confirms the main functions and purposes of designating land within the Green Belt. PPG2 also explains the significance of *“appropriate”* and *“inappropriate”* development, together with the need to justify any *“inappropriate”* development in terms of *“very special circumstances”*. Such guidelines will feature in any assessment of Green Belt development by a determining Local Planning Authority.

- 4.15 Saved Policy EMP7 confirms that *“the expansion of existing firms within the main settlement will be allowed on land within or adjacent to their existing sites, providing no significant environmental problems are caused and the extension conforms to the other policies of the plan”*. The explanatory text confirms that *“the maintenance of existing sources of employment is essential to the continued economic viability of the area. Firms will benefit from the ability to expand their operations without necessitating their relocation”*.
- 4.16 Policy EMP8 confirms that *“the expansion of established firms on land outside main settlements will be allowed providing it is essential to maintain the existing source of employment and is not contrary to the other policies of the Plan”*. Again, the explanatory text confirms that *“there are a number of firms in the Borough which are located outside the main settlements. The Council has no wish to restrict their continued prosperity and efficiency”*.

5.0 Assessment of Planning Considerations

- 5.1 The historic use of the application site as part of the former substantial Mullards industrial complex is an important material planning consideration. Notwithstanding the fact that the majority of the former industrial buildings have recently been demolished, important policies at Government and local level support the principal of Brownfield site regeneration for appropriate uses. In this particular location, a continued employment use offers greatest compatibility with broader land uses and with emerging employment strategies. At national level, regeneration of the former Mullards site would be consistent with the strong messages contained within PPS4 to promote sustainable economic development. Likewise, key regional initiatives see the economic revival as underpinning the wider regeneration of the North West.
- 5.2 Finally, Saved Local Plan Policies support continued economic retention and appropriate regeneration on established industrial sites. On that basis Fort Vale's intentions would be wholly consistent with adopted policy, raising no issues which would oppose the grant of permission. However, in this instance, the encroachment of the Green Belt boundary onto part of the Former Mullards site adds a further planning dimension.
- 5.3 Development within the Green Belt is, by definition "*inappropriate development*", - thus requiring an applicant to demonstrate the "*very special circumstances*" which would justify a grant of permission, in this instance. The reference has previously been made to guidance given within PPG2 regarding "*major developed sites*" within the Green Belt – where limited site regeneration would be allowed subject to the preconditions set out within Annex C. In this instance, no such designation exists but the major developed character of the Former Mullards complex is nevertheless an important background consideration. Until fairly recently, the glass making plant, with its associated production and warehousing facilities comprised a major industrial operation. Whilst its substantial building blocks were located within (but very close to) the settlement boundary, its presence nevertheless must have had a major impact upon the adjacent Green Belt. Certainly it would have compromised the "*openness of the Green Belt*" and would have been regarded as an "*unattractive landscape of urban character*".
- 5.4 The clearance of the majority of the buildings presents an opportunity to regenerate the site for modern industrial and employment purposes in a more sensitive manor and with greater regard to the surrounding environment. It also provides an important opportunity to create substantial jobs. These are important considerations which have a bearing upon "*very special circumstances*". Indeed, Paragraph 1.6 of PPG2 confirms the important objective "*to improve damaged and derelict land around towns*".
- 5.5 Following Fort Vale's purchase of the Mullards site and establishment of their International Headquarters, some 249 jobs have been created at Simonstone. Whilst these are undoubtedly an important 'gain' for the District, the company must safeguard its future business (and those employed within it) by investing in the future – whether through its products, its technology , its plant or its buildings.
- 5.6 One of the key reasons why Fort Vale decided to invest in Ribble Valley was the ability of the Caldervale Park (Former Mullards) site to accommodate the company's changing requirements, together with any future

expansion. At that time the company transferred the majority of its manufacturing processes from the two sites which it occupied in Nelson to the new Headquarters at Simonstone. At that time a decision was made not to relocate the Investment Casting Foundry since the facility was housed in a relatively new building (1994) which had been purpose built. Consequently it was decided to trans-ship the casting output to Simonstone where it would be further processed for inclusion into the products supplied to the chemical transport industry worldwide. Further castings have continued to be manufactured in China, followed by lengthy transportation to Fort Vale in the UK.

- 5.7 Having operated on that basis for over two years it has become increasingly evident that the overall business would benefit substantially from having the casting process integrated within the main manufacturing facility at Simonstone. The primary justification for relocation are the reduction in lead-time of castings entering the manufacturing process, the elimination of transport between the two Lancashire sites and the lack of growth potential for the existing foundry itself. Significant benefits also accrue from the reduction in dependency upon Far Eastern manufactured castings – again with carbon efficiency gains.
- 5.8 Initially the transfers between Nelson and Simonstone were anticipated to be 1-2 journeys per day but in reality this has proved to be as many as 20 between the two factories. This is highly inefficient in company terms but also contrary to the principles of sustainable development. By building a new foundry at Simonstone, lead times can be reduced by up to 30% and the capacity of the facility can be increased with the additional space proposed. Material waste from the manufacturing process provides the majority of the melt stock for the casting process, further reducing transport between the sites.
- 5.9 The resulting efficiencies constitute “*very special circumstances*” which support the grant of permission. PPS4 strongly supports the principle of “*planning for sustainable economic growth*” whilst PPS1 reaffirms the fundamental requirement to promote sustainable planning at all levels. Of further importance is the ability to support the future of Fort Vale Engineering (and its International Headquarters at Simonstone) as a world leading manufacturer. An important by-product is the provision of a further 38 jobs which will be achieved partly through the transfer of existing Nelson staff and partly through new recruitment.
- 5.10 The final “*very special circumstance*” which supports the selected location for the New Foundry is the logic of not compromising the redevelopment options for the remaining vacant part of the Former Mullards site which fronts onto Simonstone Lane. Siting the Foundry at the rear of the site preserves flexibility for comprehensive redevelopment of the frontage land whilst at the same time distancing what some may perceive as a potentially ‘inappropriate’ use away from residential properties located on Railway Terrace. On that final point, the applicants can reassure those residents and the Planning Authority that modern day processes have eliminated the noise, smell and dust problems associated with Foundries in the past. No difficulties of this kind are anticipated at Calder Vale Park.
- 5.11 For the above reason, we consider that “*very special circumstances*” do exist and that the application should be approved, being in accord with adopted planning policy.