

Report to:	EXECUTIVE CABINET		
Date:	27 July 2022		
Executive Member:	Councillor Jan Jackson - Executive Member (Planning, Transport and Connectivity)		
Reporting Officer:	Nick Fenwick, Interim Director of Place.		
Subject:	DESIGNATION OF REGIONALLY IMPORTANT GEOLOGICAL SITE		
Report Summary:	Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGs) are a local designation recognising locations which are the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside of statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and are used across Greater Manchester. Addition of location following a review.		
Recommendations:	<p>It is recommended that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Designation of the Regionally Important Geological Site at Rocher Vale following survey by the Greater Manchester RIGS Group and endorsement of GMEU is noted. (ii) Updated spatial data to reflect the designation is published to inform land management and planning decisions. 		
Corporate Plan:	Supports a sustainable environment that works for all generations and future generations		
Policy Implications:	Designation of the RIGS would be a material consideration in determining any development that may affect the site, as well as in formulating policy and allowing the Council to most effectively manage its greenspaces		
Financial Implications:	There are no direct financial implications arising from the decision at this stage.		
(Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)	The financing arrangements for any future site maintenance expenditure relating to this site will be subject to separate approval.		
Legal Implications:	The designation of a RIG is a non-statutory function. However, a designation at Rocher Vale and the evidence base would be a material consideration in considering any development that might affect the land concerned.		
(Authorised by the Borough Solicitor)	The Council should always make decisions based on the current law, together with the most up to date evidence and information available to avoid successful challenge. Keeping policies on which it seeks to rely up to date is therefore key to good governance and practice.		
Risk Management:	The reviewing of RIGS in a managed way by GMEU provides an update and consistency in reporting, recoding and monitoring across Greater Manchester and supports existing and forthcoming planning policy, alongside the wider management and protection of local geological assets.		
Background Information:	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 20%;">Appendix 1</td> <td>The full assessment of the site</td> </tr> </table>	Appendix 1	The full assessment of the site
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Appendix 2

The proposed Rocher Vale RIGS boundary

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the author, Graham Holland, Planning Policy Team Manager, by:



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Regionally Important Geological Sites (RIGs) are a local designation recognising locations which are the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside of statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and are used across Greater Manchester.
- 1.2 The review of RIGS is undertaken by the Greater Manchester RIGS Group, a member of GeoConservation UK comprised of voluntary amateur and professional geologists. The GM RIGS Group is supported by the Manchester Geological Association, as well as by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit and Greater Manchester's BioConservation Group.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site at Rocher Vale has been identified as hosting a wide array of geomorphological features including an incised fluvial gorge, fluvially derived spurs, differential weathering of exposed outcrops of sedimentary rocks and easily accessible outcrops of Pennine Lower Coal Measures. The GM RIGS Group also identified the potential for the site to contribute to a geological/historical trail as the site abuts the Park Bridge Iron Works and Heritage Centre. The full assessment of the site is included in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 Rocher Vale is already a designated Local Nature Reserve and Site of Biological Importance (Rocher Vale South) and as such is protected under Policy N2 of the adopted Tameside Unitary Development Plan. The site also sits entirely within the Green Belt and abuts the existing Park Bridge Quarry RIGS, becoming the third RIGS in Tameside alongside Park Bridge Quarry and Arden Bridge Quarry. The proposed Rocher Vale RIGS boundary is included in **Appendix 2**. The existing Local Nature Reserve and SBI boundaries will not be affected by the RIGS designation.
- 2.3 Part of the proposed RIGS crosses into the borough of Oldham. Officers within the adjacent borough are similarly preparing a report for discussion with Members to recognise the asset.
- 2.4 Designation of the RIGS would be a material consideration in determining any development that may affect the site, as well as in formulating policy and allowing the Council to most effectively manage its greenspaces.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The reviewing of RIGS in a managed way by GMEU provides an update and consistency in reporting, recoding and monitoring across Greater Manchester and supports existing and forthcoming planning policy, alongside the wider management and protection of local geological assets.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 As set out at the front of the report.