

WeStruct Consulting Engineers



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Planning Statement

For 134-136 Drake Street Rochdale OL16 1PS

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1. Introduction

This Planning Statement, along with the accompanying site plan, full floor plans, and elevation drawings, has been prepared in support of the proposed development at 134–136 Drake Street, Rochdale. These documents form a comprehensive submission that addresses relevant planning matters, including land use, site constraints, local planning policy, design guidance, and any potential issues associated with the proposal. Each of these topics is addressed categorically within this statement.

The proposal is submitted on behalf of the Kurdish Community and Tuition Centre of Rochdale, aiming to meet the community's current needs at this location. This statement supports the application and sits alongside a suite of other documents, including a detailed Heritage Assessment, which considers the building's historic and architectural value within its local context.

Under Planning Permission Application Reference: 24/00227/FUL, the existing property is a two-storey building that has been primarily used as a combination of offices and educational space. The ground floor currently includes an office area, staffroom, communal hall, library, and kitchen. The first floor provides tuition classrooms and communal prayer spaces, with facilities arranged to accommodate male and female users separately.

This Planning Statement sets out the rationale for the proposed development, ensuring that the site continues to function effectively as a vital educational and cultural hub for the Kurdish community in Rochdale.

2. Planning Policy Background

This Planning Statement, alongside the Heritage Statement and accompanying site, floor, and elevation plans, addresses key aspects of the proposal, including land use, site constraints, relevant policies, planning guidance, and potential issues. Each of these matters is considered within the context of the proposed development.

Drake Street is set to become a central focus of the town centre's regeneration, particularly with the ongoing development of the Drake Street Heritage Action Zone, located directly opposite the application site. That redevelopment is delivering high-quality modern housing, making the previous intention for residential conversion at this location less appropriate and less aligned with emerging priorities.

At the national level, the overarching guidance is provided by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), most recently updated on 19th December 2023. The NPPF continues to guide sustainable development, aiming to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. In relation to this proposal, Chapter 8 emphasizes the importance of promoting healthy and safe communities. It supports planning decisions that create inclusive, accessible spaces, including those accommodating cultural and community uses. Paragraph 99 further highlights the importance of providing educational facilities.

Paragraph 125 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should play an active role in identifying and facilitating land suitable for development, including brownfield sites. Paragraph 135(f) encourages the creation of inclusive and accessible environments that promote health, wellbeing, and a high standard of amenity for both current and future users.

In terms of transport and accessibility, Paragraph 115 advises that development should only be refused on highway grounds where there is an unacceptable risk to highway safety or if the cumulative impact on the road network is severe. Paragraph 116 further supports development that prioritizes pedestrian and cycle access, facilitates high-quality public transport connections, addresses the needs of those with disabilities or limited mobility, creates safe and welcoming spaces, and supports the use of ultra-low emission vehicles through infrastructure such as electric charging points.

Local Planning Policies

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 establishes that planning decisions must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations suggest otherwise.

Rochdale's Core Strategy, adopted in October 2016, serves as the principal Development Plan Document. It replaces much of the earlier Unitary Development Plan (UDP) and outlines the long-term strategic policies that guide future development within the borough. The Core Strategy sets the framework against which planning applications are assessed, with a strong emphasis on delivering sustainable development and growth in line with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

A central aim of the Core Strategy is to attract investment and enhance prosperity across the borough by 2028. It plays a critical role in steering the regeneration of Rochdale, building upon past investments and identifying future priority areas. The strategy seeks to harness the borough's strengths—its heritage, identity, and strategic connections with neighbouring towns—to create a vibrant and sustainable future.

Several policies within the Core Strategy are directly relevant to this proposal:

- DM1 – General Development Requirements

- P3 – Improving the Design of New Development
- E1 – Establishing Thriving Town, District, and Local Centres
- C2 – Focusing on Regeneration Areas and Economic Growth Corridors
- C7 – Delivering Education Facilities
- C8 – Improving Community, Sport, Leisure, and Cultural Facilities
- G9 – Reducing the Impact of Pollution
- T2 – Improving Accessibility

In addition, some saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) remain applicable:

- G/D/1 – Defined Urban Area
- G/S/1 – Town Centres
- R/3 – Physical Regeneration Area (now largely superseded)

The R/3 policy has effectively been superseded by the designation of the Drake Street Heritage Action Zone (HAZ), which focuses on the historic route linking the railway station with the Town Hall. As part of a wider effort to rebalance the town centre, this area is being reimagined to support new uses, particularly residential and leisure, to make Drake Street an attractive place to live, work, and visit.

The HAZ initiative is a collaborative effort involving several key partners, including Rochdale Borough Council, the Cooperative Heritage Trust, The Cooperative College, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, Link4Life, and the Rochdale Development Agency. The shared goal is to encourage property owners and stakeholders to revitalise this historic gateway, transforming it into a pioneering, affordable area for town centre living with a strong focus on leisure, culture, and heritage.

3. Site and Surroundings

The application concerns an end-terrace property situated on Drake Street, with its side elevation facing Moore Street. The building is two storeys high and located approximately 80 metres outside the formal boundary of Rochdale Town Centre. It lies adjacent to both the Rochdale Town Centre Conservation Area and the Drake Street Heritage Action Zone. Currently, there are five parking spaces located at the rear of the property.

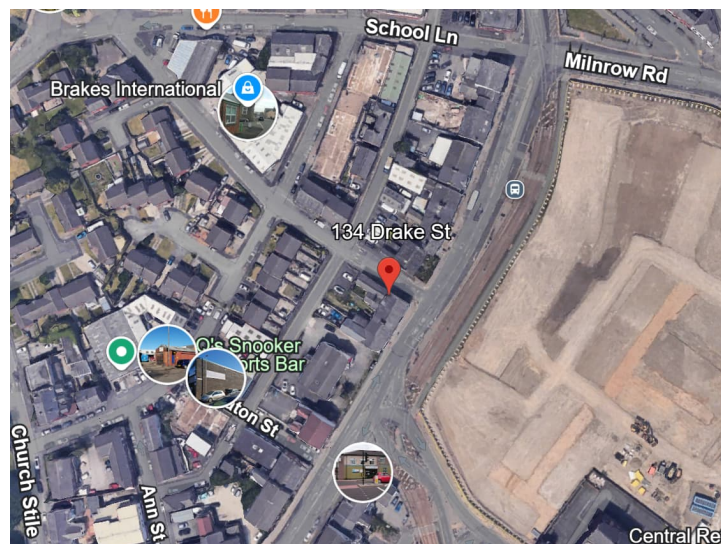
The surrounding terrace buildings along Drake Street comprise a mix of ground-floor shops, commercial premises, and social/community facilities. The site is well-connected, situated near bus stops in both directions and close to the major road intersection at Drake Street and Milnrow Road. The opposite side of Drake Street is presently a major construction zone, part of the ongoing development within the Heritage Action Zone.

The property itself dates back to the late 19th century and features a wide, double-fronted shopfront at ground floor level. The first floor includes vertical sash-style windows with stone heads and sills. Access to No. 136 is from the Drake Street frontage, while No. 134 is accessed via two separate entrances on Moore Street. Internally, there are connecting points between the two properties. The first floor and the side elevation have been finished in cream render.

The site benefits from a sustainable location, with strong public transport links—although there is no immediate tram stop, the tram line runs nearby. It is also within walking distance of a variety of local services and amenities, accessible via well-maintained pavements. The area is a compact urban setting, with most servicing of properties taking place from the rear.

Along this stretch of Drake Street, all front-facing properties north and south of Moore Street are used for commercial purposes at ground level. Notably, to the south, No. 130 houses the Nigerian Community Centre, while No. 114 is the Navigation Inn. On Moore Street, at the corner with Great George Street, is the Al-Abbas Institute. This indicates that the area accommodates a mix of community uses alongside commercial and nearby residential properties.

Directly opposite the application site is No. 132, formerly occupied by the Rochdale Alcohol and Drug Service, which is now proposed for residential redevelopment. Further along, a large site across Drake Street—formerly part of a retail park that included Wynsor's, Focus, and MFI before being cleared around 2013 for the tram extension—is undergoing major redevelopment. Plans are in place to deliver over 200 new homes, including 142 apartments, helping to reintroduce an active street frontage along Drake Street that has been absent for many years. This development is expected to significantly contribute to the area's vibrancy and regeneration.



The property on the corner of Moore Street at No.134-136 Drake Street

4. Involvement

This Planning Statement sets out a reasoned justification for the proposed development, drawing on both local and national planning policies and guidance. Key considerations such as amenity, design, and heritage are addressed within this statement, with further detail provided in the accompanying Heritage Statements.

5. Planning History

The check on planning history identified (most recent to oldest):

Ref 24/00227/FUL Change of Use of Offices at First Floor (Use Class E) to 3 No. Self-Contained Apartments and Single Storey Extension to Rear. 134-136 Drake Street.

Ref 22/01532/FUL Change of use of first floor from office space to 3 no. self-contained apartments. Single storey rear extension to ground floor offices. 134-136 Drake Street. Validated Mon 23 Jan 2023 and decided.

Ref 01/D39284 New Shop Front and Alterations to External Elevations 134-140 Drake Street. Validated Thu 20 Sep 2001 and decided.

Ref 94/D31392 External Alterations to Building 134 Drake Street. Validated Fri 28 Oct 1994 with status unknown.

Ref 94/D30892 Change of Use from Former Offices to Doctors Surgery 134 Drake Street. Validated Fri 24 Jun 1994 and decided.

Ref 06/D47062 Two Storey Rear Extension to Office 136 Drake Street. Validated Thu 30 Mar 2006 and decided.

Ref 93/D30236 Two Storey Rear Extension to Building 136 Drake Street. Validate 14 Dec 1993 and decided.

Ref 25/00412/FUL (Refused) Proposed flat roof rear dormer for tuition class use. Erection of brick wall at ground floor with fire escape balcony area above. Additional fire exit stairwell at first floor, relocation of previously approved fire escape stairwell. Erection of additional side window to the ground floor, and additional rear windows and door at first and ground floor.

6. Proposed Development

The proposed development aims to enhance the functionality and long-term viability of the existing building while carefully preserving its historic character and architectural integrity. A central element of the scheme is the retention of the building's traditional shopfront, which plays a key role in maintaining the visual cohesion and heritage value of the wider streetscape along Drake Street.

A loft conversion is proposed to accommodate a new tuition classroom space, supporting the educational function of the building. 3 flat-roof rear dormers is to be constructed, finished with GRP (Glass Reinforced Plastic) and windows matching the proportions and style of the existing openings and dormer stud wall having a slate tile cladding finishing material. The dormers will add a total volume of approximately 29m³ to the roof, ensuring the scale remains appropriate and the addition integrates well with the existing roofline and building character. The presence of similar front and rear dormers at nearby properties along Drake Street further supports the appropriateness of this design approach.

A key amendment to the previously approved scheme involves the repositioning of the external fire escape staircase. The original location led directly toward Moore Street, raising safety concerns due to potential street-level congestion and obstruction. In response, the revised proposal relocates the stairwell to a more suitable position, ensuring safer and more efficient access while maintaining functional entry points from both the Drake Street frontage and the Moore Street side elevation.

Further external changes include the erection of a brick wall at ground-floor level with a fire escape balcony positioned above. A new fire escape stairwell will also be introduced at the first-floor level. In addition, new openings are proposed: an extra window on the ground-floor side elevation, as well as new rear-facing windows and a door at both ground and first-floor levels. These additions are carefully designed to ensure they do not detract from the building's visual character or disrupt the harmony of the façade.

Internally, the proposal includes a series of alterations intended to improve spatial efficiency and functionality. These works involve the creation of more open-plan areas through the removal of non-structural partitions, supported by appropriate structural reinforcements to ensure the building's integrity is preserved. The internal configuration will also be revised to relocate existing WC facilities and introduce additional ones to better accommodate the needs of the enhanced educational and community use. Importantly, all internal modifications will be confined within the existing building envelope, with no impact on its external appearance, historic fabric, or contribution to the local character.

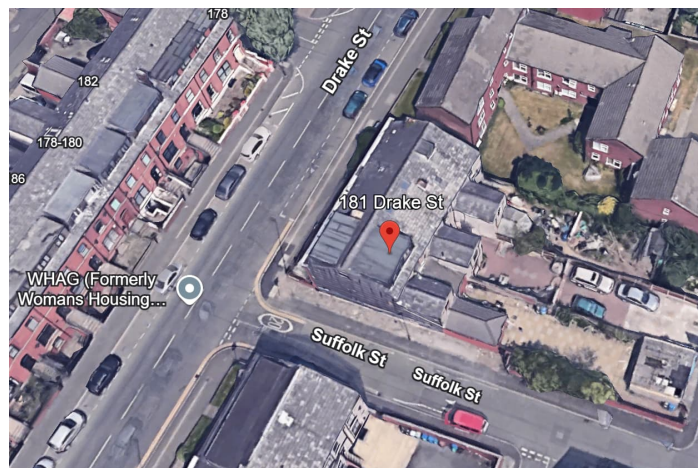
7. Similar Developments in the Surrounding Area

1- 181 Drake St, Rochdale OL11 1EF, UK

The new development at 181 Drake Street features both front and rear dormer extensions, each constructed with a flat roof design. The inclusion of these dormers—particularly the rear one demonstrates a precedent for such additions within the local context and suggests that this form of development is generally considered acceptable in the surrounding area.

The presence of a rear dormer at this property indicates that similar proposals are unlikely to pose significant concerns in terms of visual impact or harm to the character of the area, especially when designed sensitively and in proportion with the host building. The use of a flat roof for both dormers further reflects a modern yet practical design approach that aligns with other alterations along the street.

Given that this development has been completed and sits harmoniously within the existing streetscape, it provides a relevant example that supports the case for similar roof extensions elsewhere in the vicinity. It reinforces the view that rear dormers are an established and accepted feature along this part of Drake Street, and do not, in themselves, detract from the architectural integrity or the amenity of the area.



The property 181 Drake St, Rochdale OL11 1EF

2- 195 Drake St, Rochdale OL16 1PJ, UK

The property located at 195 Drake Street, Rochdale, OL16 1PJ, also features both front and rear dormer windows, reflecting a similar development pattern to that seen at other properties along this stretch of Drake Street. These dormers are integrated into the existing roof structure and adopt a flat roof design, which appears to be a recurring feature within the area.

It shows further justification for the acceptability of similar proposals in the immediate area. They highlight how such additions can be successfully incorporated without compromising local character or heritage value, especially when consistent with the scale, materials, and form of nearby structures.



The property 181 Drake St, Rochdale OL11 1EF

3- 201 Drake St, Rochdale OL11 1EF, UK

Similarly, the property at 201 Drake Street has received approval for the addition of both front and rear dormer extensions, each designed with a flat roof. The combined effect of these dormers has created a more rectangular-shaped roof profile, which stands out as a more distinctive and modern intervention compared to the traditional roof forms typically seen along this part of Drake Street.

While the design at No. 201 may be considered more contemporary and somewhat different in appearance from the prevailing character of the surrounding buildings, it is important to note that it still gained planning approval. This suggests a level of flexibility within the local planning context, allowing for carefully considered modern adaptations even where the design introduces new elements to the established streetscape.



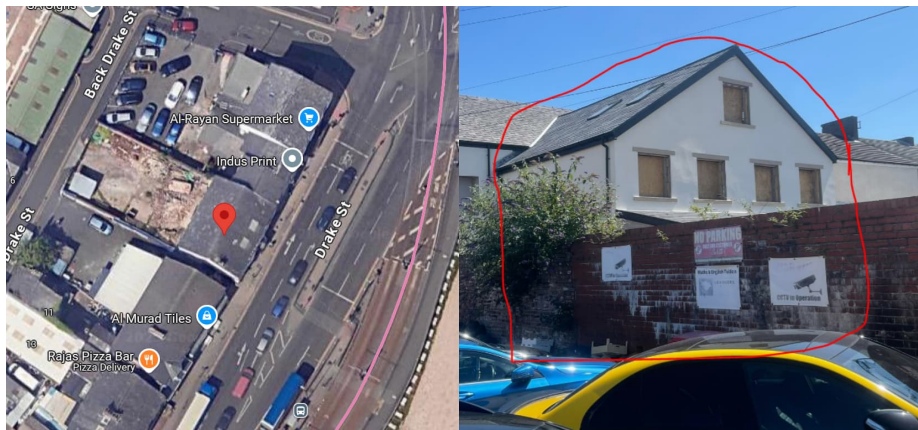
The property 201 Drake St, Rochdale OL11 1EF

4- 27 Drake St, Rochdale OL16 1RX, UK

The new development at 27 Drake Street, Rochdale, OL16 1RX, has recently been granted planning permission for a substantial two-storey rear extension measuring approximately 6 metres in depth. While the proposal has received approval, there are noticeable concerns regarding its visual impact and compatibility with the surrounding built environment.

The extension appears visually dominant and somewhat incongruous when viewed in the context of the neighbouring properties. Its scale and massing do not fully reflect the existing architectural rhythm or the traditional character of the immediate area. In particular, the structure seems bulky and lacks the subtle design cues that typically help new developments blend seamlessly with their surroundings.

Although it meets the technical planning requirements, the extension raises questions about how such developments align with broader heritage and design policies, especially in a location that holds historic and architectural significance. Below is an image illustrating the site and the new development for reference.



The property 27 Drake St, Rochdale OL16 1RX, with 6m Double Storey Extension

8. Conclusions

This Planning Statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is fully compliant with the policies set out in the adopted Rochdale Local Plan, relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), and the latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The scheme will deliver high-quality educational and community facilities, contributing positively to the ongoing regeneration of Drake Street and complementing the significant new developments emerging opposite the site. Moreover, it brings a previously underused loft back into active, sustainable use, supporting community needs while preserving the building's historic and architectural value.

In response to the previous refusal, the proposed dormer window has been significantly reduced in size and volume to ensure it is proportionate to the existing roof form and visually consistent with the surrounding townscape. The revised design now minimises bulk and massing, achieving a more subordinate and sympathetic appearance that preserves the character of the property and the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed building. The amendments are intended to fully address the concerns raised under Policies P1, P2, and P3 of the Rochdale Core Strategy, Policy JP-P2 of Places for Everyone, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Given the above, this proposal should be supported in full by the Council.