



JAMES CAMPBELL ASSOCIATES LTD

CHARTERED ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES



**Campbell House
173 Rochdale Road
Firgrove
Rochdale
OL16 3BN**

Tel: 01706 354888

Mob: 07817 623183

Email: admin@jamescampbellassociates.co.uk

Web: www.jamescampbellassociates.co.uk

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Sequential Test Report

**For Proposed Change of Use from B8 to Class E(a) Princess House, Princess Street,
Rochdale, OL12 0HA**

1. Introduction

This report sets out the sequential test for a proposed change of use from B8 (storage and distribution with associated offices) to Class E(a) – retail (excluding hot food) at Princess House, Princess Street, Rochdale.

The sequential test is prepared in accordance with:

- NPPF (2023) – Paragraphs 87–88
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- Rochdale Core Strategy (2016): Particularly policies E1 (Establishing thriving town, district and local centres) and E2 (Increasing jobs and prosperity)

2. Site Context

- Address: Princess House, Princess Street, Rochdale, OL12 0HA
- Existing Use: B8 – general warehouse/storage with ancillary office
- Proposed Use: Class E(a) – retail sales of goods (excluding hot food)
- Location: Edge-of-centre location approx. 250m north of Rochdale Town Centre boundary

Princess House is a well-established commercial property with on-site parking and service access. The building has a prominent street frontage on Princess Street, is accessible via public transport, and is adjacent to mixed commercial and light industrial units.

3. Sequential Test Methodology

The sequential approach requires the applicant to:

- Consider town centre locations first,
- Then consider edge-of-centre sites,
- And only then out-of-centre sites—subject to availability, suitability, and viability for the intended retail use.

This test applies to all retail, leisure and office proposals outside defined centres unless they are small-scale and intended to meet local needs.

4. Defined Centre Identification

Rochdale Town Centre is the nearest designated centre. District centres considered include:

- Rochdale Town Centre (primary area of focus)
 - Heywood
 - Middleton
 - Littleborough
 - Milnrow
 - Newbold
 - Deeplish
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5. Assessment Criteria

- Availability: Is the site available now or in the short term?
 - Suitability: Can it accommodate the proposed development type, format, and access needs?
 - Viability: Can the site reasonably support the proposed use without unviable or extensive adaptation?
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6. Site Search Results

a) Rochdale Town Centre

- No suitable or available units identified that can meet the floor area and layout requirements for the proposed retail format.
- Available units are either:
 - Too small, with less than 100m² net internal area,
 - Fragmented (multi-level unsuitable buildings), or
 - Designated for food-based Class E or sui generis use.
- Several vacant units were reviewed, but all are either under re-let agreements, unsuitable in configuration, or would require disproportionate internal restructuring.

b) District and Local Centres

- No available sites within Heywood, Milnrow, Deeplish or Littleborough were found to offer suitable floorplate or servicing arrangements.
- Sites reviewed include local shopping parades, former bank branches, and upper floor spaces—none of which meet operational, accessibility, or viability criteria for retail reconfiguration.

c) Edge-of-Centre

- The application site itself lies within 250m of the town centre boundary, which places it within the edge-of-centre category under NPPF definitions.
 - The building is of appropriate size, immediately available, and can be viably reused with minimal adaptation, supporting sustainable re-use of an existing commercial asset.
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7. Conclusions

The sequential test demonstrates that:

- There are no suitable or available in-centre or district centre sites capable of accommodating the proposed Class E(a) retail use suitable for the applicants use.
- The proposed site at Princess House is edge-of-centre, sustainable, accessible, and makes effective use of an existing building.
- The proposal complies with the sequential approach required by the NPPF and Rochdale Core Strategy.

The change of use to Class E(a) is therefore sequentially compliant and should be supported on retail policy grounds.
